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THE PRINCE

OF THE

EDITED
BY
VERNON LEE.



HUNDRED SOUPS



Dunston B 12

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J. W. Dunston
The gift of his wife
Easter 1883.





A TAME MONKEY GRASPED THE EXTENDED HAND OF THE ASTOUNDED DOGE.

— 2 —

THE PRINCE
OF THE
HUNDRED SOUPS

A Puppet-Show in Narrative

EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

VERNON LEE

Author of "Belcaro" &c.

ILLUSTRATED BY SARAH BIRCH



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T. FISHER UNWIN

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THE GRESHAM PRESS,
CHILWORTH AND LONDON.





BELLA AND EFFIE STILLMAN,

IN REMEMBRANCE OF

MANY HAPPY EVENINGS

BY THEIR

MOTHER'S FIRESIDE.



EDITOR'S PREFACE.

WE had pretty well decided to send the "Prince of the Hundred Soups" into the world just as if it were any other of the swarm of story-books prepared for Christmas, and not to bother about any kind of explanation, when, on second thoughts, my friend Mr. Unwin applied to me for a preface giving some account of the authorship of the book and of the school of art (if art may be connected with harlequinades) to which it belongs. And as it is always better to avoid any kind of mystification of the public and the reviewers, I am very willing to do so.

The curious circumstance about this "Prince of the Hundred Soups" (which, as I shall explain further

on, is a slightly modified translation of an unpublished German MS.) is that it was intended by its author not in the least as a Christmas book, but as the practical demonstration of a theory based upon an enormous amount of research. It was an experiment to show how much more interest could be got out of the Harlequins, Pantaloons, Columbines, and so forth, of pantomimes and puppet-shows than out of the distressed men and women—who know that they ought not to do it, but insist upon doing it nevertheless—of modern fiction; just on the same plan as Monsieur Littre's attempt to demonstrate, by translating Homer into medieval French, what a very great pity it was that Alfred de Musset or Théophile Gautier would write poems in the language of their own day. For learned folk are liable to have very peculiar crotchets; and the author of the "Prince of the Hundred Soups" happened to be learned almost to the height of monomania. He was the man who knew more than any other creature ever did about the Comedy of Masks. What the Comedy of Masks is or was you probably, on reflection, don't know. I have myself written half a volume on the subject, but I fear you have never read it, and perhaps never will read it (although I assure you it is by no means a bad book in its way);

so under the circumstances I had better tell you a little about this Comedy of Masks. But it would be simpler if I explained first who the author was, and how the MS. came into my hands.

When I was a child there lived in Rome a German old gentleman who was one of the sights of the place. Every town has several curious and grotesque, or melancholy and mysterious, figures, or figures in which all the four characters are curiously jumbled; whose odd outline looms, as it were, constantly on the horizon, familiar to every man, woman, and child; so that every now and then one exclaims, "Oh, there's So-and-so!" yet really known to no one — living monuments, well known as the church steeples, but whose origin and history are wrapped in mystery. Of this kind was my old German; one of my earliest recollections of Rome, and who, to my childish mind, seemed as inevitable a part of it as did the Coliseum or St. Peter's. The Roman people called him *Mangia-Zucchero*, "Eat-sugar," probably because he appeared to live off nothing but sweets. I say he appeared, because he took all his meals, or presumable meals, in public, and nothing more substantial than cream tarts was ever seen in process of being eaten by him. For he spent an enormous proportion of his day in

cabs, and he was always eating something out of a paper: a wizen little old man, with the most singular face conceivable, in shape like that of an ape, and with an ape's hundred wrinkles and anxious, nervous, melancholy expression, but white, like a piece of book-binder's vellum. Whenever you least expected it, there he was in his cab before you—invariably alone, and invariably eating. You would see that cab of his (it was never the same one, although he might have bought a coach and six with the money he must have spent on cab fares those endless years, I should say) leisurely walking along the Corso, blocking up the way at the very hour of the fashionable drive; the magnificent carriage, poised like a boat on its springs, of some woman of fashion behind; the great blazoned and hammer-clothed coach of some cardinal in front; and there, between them, the little old man cocked up in his cab, looking round him with benign contempt, and munching something out of a paper bag. The cardinal's lacqueys, hanging on to the coach, would turn round and almost laugh in his face; the swell coachman behind would send his whip cracking almost into his ears, and the jostled crowd would laugh and say, "Look at Mangia-Zuccherò!" or some street boy would cry out, "Well, Mangia-

Zucchero, is it nice?" but he never took any notice. Sometimes you would see his cab drawn up before Nazzari's, the grand pastry-cook in Piazza di Spagna; sometimes before some little stall in Trastevere, where stale and highly varnished buns, and red and yellow painted biscuits, and dried jujube berries and pine pips were for sale: he did not mind what it was as long as it was sweet. I remember meeting a cab with Mangia-Zucchero in it on bitter winter days among the aqueducts and tombs near the city gates. He was always without a great coat or comforter; for that was another peculiarity of his, that he wore the same clothes all the year round; also in pelting rain eating his cakes under an umbrella, perfectly placid. The only thing was that no one had ever seen him on foot, or otherwise than eating. He must have been made of cast iron or of guttapercha, for climate had no effect upon him, and he drove about just the same in the sharp snow-wind and the burning August sun, braving heat, cold, malaria, fever, everything. And thus he had been known, apparently unchanged, ever since the memory of man. No one ever called him anything save Mangia-Zucchero; but on inquiry he was found to be called "Il Signor Todéro Vesedon" (I cannot make the Roman pronunciation tally with

any kind of English spelling), which, as I afterwards discovered, was a form of Theodor Wesendonk. Tradition assigned to him a very miserable house of only one storey (probably pulled down by this time) in a perfect Roman St. Giles', a network of dirty lanes behind S. Carlo a Catinari, in a street called Via della Fava d' Oro, or the Golden Bean, entirely inhabited by nailers, who, with their black and half-naked bodies bending over their anvils, looked remarkably like the assistants of a medieval hangman. Further, the house was stated to be full of monkeys, Mangia-Zuccherò's only servants; and there were vague reports of a wonderful theatre, in which only monkeys performed. Of course he was said to be enormously rich.

Such was Theodor Wesendonk, otherwise Mangia-Zuccherò, as he exists in my childish recollections. You will ask what this crazy person in his cab has to do with the Comedy of Masks and the "Prince of the Hundred Soups." A little patience, and you shall see. One year—it must be some six years ago, or perhaps more — the familiar silhouette of the old German munching in his cab was missing from the Roman horizon. I don't know whether any one noticed his absence; there are figures which, familiar

as long as present, are forgotten as soon as they disappear, like a bench or a tree. Anyhow, Mangia-Zucchero completely vanished from my mind. But now I am coming to my story. Somewhat more recently I was in Rome again, and extremely taken up with the Italian things of the eighteenth century. I was particularly studying the subjects of which I treated in my essays on the Comedy of Masks, Goldoni, and Gozzi. Such a study was not very easy anywhere; and at that time the Roman public library, or rather the chaos resulting from the fusion of half a dozen libraries of suppressed religious establishments, was (as many students will remember) wholly inaccessible. I was therefore reduced to getting my materials here, there, and everywhere: one book at one book-stall, another elsewhere; a print here, another print there; it was a perpetual hunt through the various repositories of useless literature. One day, as good luck would have it, I discovered a bookstall hitherto unknown to me, or rather, a shop of old books, on the third floor of a house near the Sapienza, or Roman university. The owner of it was quite out of the common run; he was not a shopkeeper, but a real bibliophile, and a man of excellent manners and much learning; for the rest, a singular character, exercising

this trade not as a means of living, for he was well off, but as the easiest way of satisfying his passion for rare books. As long as a book possessed for him the first flavour of its rareness, no amount of money would induce him to part with it ; but as soon as he grew tired of its possession, or capriciously anxious to get some other book, he would sell it for next to nothing. On my inquiring whether he had any books about the old Italian comedy, he at first answered that he had none ; and I was on the point of leaving the shop, when he stopped me and inquired into my reasons for asking. We had some conversation on the subject of the Comedy of Masks, upon which I was astonished to find that he was extremely well informed. He seemed satisfied with my answers, and finding that I wanted the books not from any spirit of collecting (for I never have possessed, and never shall possess, a single book of any value, in my born days), but merely for the sake of information to be got out of them, he confessed that he did possess some books on the subject, but that they were not for sale ; but, he added (with that generous helpfulness in literary matters which seems, alas, quite confined to Italians), he would willingly lend me anything I might care for. Then he asked me to return on a fixed day, on which

he took me to another place of his, crammed with invaluable old books. After displaying to me his pet treasures, among which a complete set of various editions of "Poliphilo," the original editions of "Savonarola's Sermons," and two specimens of "Botticelli and Dante," he took me to a series of shelves, entirely covered with the rarest books and prints connected with the Comedy of Masks. There were many more, he said, but he had kept only the more valuable ones. Delighted with this discovery, I asked him whether he himself had collected all this. "No," he said, "it is part of the library of a friend of mine, who died two years ago, and left me all his books." And, opening one of the volumes, he showed me an elegant label, in which the usual coat of arms was replaced by a panoply of masks, musical instruments, and similar attributes, and bearing the name, "Theodor August Amadeus Wesendonk."

"And who," I inquired, "was this learned gentleman?" The bookseller hesitated for a moment.

"I think," he said, "you must have known him here in Rome—at least by sight—for he drove about a great deal: a quiet little old man, thin, thin—*un vecchietto secco, secco, secco*. We used to call him 'Mangia-Zucchero.'"

I gaped in astonishment, and at the same time was very near bursting out laughing.

"Indeed!" I ejaculated, as the image of the old man munching the buns out of his paper bag, in his cab going at a foot's pace, rose up, with so many other forgotten memories, in my mind.

"Ah!" sighed the bookseller; "that was a man! Such learning! and wit! quite extraordinary! *proprio stupendo!* and such an excellent judgment!"

"But," I ventured to suggest timidly, "he was surely rather—well, a singular man in his habits. I mean, he was quite exceptionally fond of driving about."

The bookseller's face remained unmoved, as if not an inkling of the comicality of poor Mangia-Zuccherò's habits had ever occurred to him.

"Yes," he said, stroking his long black beard, and repeating his words in the pompous and meditative Roman drawl, "he drove about a great deal—a great deal; he had an opinion that it was dangerous to walk, lest the feet should get chilled—yes, the feet chilled. It was an opinion in which I was always unable to agree; but still, every man knows himself best—himself best."

The kindness of Signor Spolverascaffali, who has

since died, I often recall with much gratitude. He certainly helped me more than any other man in my studies. But this is irrelevant. Well, in the course of my acquaintance with this unique bookseller, I learned a great deal about poor old "Mangia-Zucchero." The bookseller had been his sole friend for many years, and always spoke of him with the greatest affection, and said he was a most charming person — "*una compitissima persona*." His charity was almost as great as his eccentricity, for he regularly supported some ten or twelve poor workmen disabled by illness, and his whole fortune went to the great hospital of Santo Spirito. He had in his youth, some sixty years ago, been a very popular German actor; but the failure of a play, written and acted by himself, had disgusted him with mankind, whose society he had completely foresworn. Accident had stranded him in Rome, and there he had lived fifty years in almost complete solitude. (Here I must interrupt the bookseller's account to say that he was, in all probability, crazy.) He had, in his disgust with the modern stage, become, like Carlo Gozzi, madly enthusiastic for the extinct Italian comedy of masks, and for its sole modern representative, the puppet-show. He had filled his home with books, prints, every

manner of thing connected with the masks, and, being able to draw, and very clever with his fingers, he had, with infinite patience and expense, constructed in his house a magnificent puppet-stage, with the most complicated machinery and a great variety of dresses and scenery. To improve this, and write and rehearse plays for this stage, was for years the sole occupation of the hours which he did not spend in the cab. He used to write letters to all the sovereigns in Europe, urging upon them to set up puppet-shows in their capitals, and forbid all realistic comedy, if they wished to save their subjects from depravity and themselves from the guillotine. But of grown-up folk only the bookseller, perhaps, ever witnessed his puppet performances, which Signor Spolverascaffali declares to have been unique spectacles ; although on Sundays and holidays the old gentleman would invite all the poor children of the neighbourhood, and after a good supper, treat them to a performance. The children of that poor district were quite devoted to him ; and when at last the poor old man died, it was found in his will that he wished his coffin to be carried by eight boys, and the pall strings held by as many girls. A great number of other children followed his funeral with torches and sprigs of green. To each

of his little friends he left wherewith to get a complete new suit and a prayer-book.

Thus much of the life of Mangia-Zucchero.

One day my friend the bookseller, on my leaving Rome, presented me with a heap of MSS. They were in German, which he could not read ; but as they were written by Mangia-Zucchero, he did not doubt I should find notes which would shed light upon my subject. Of these MSS. many did prove to be historical notes and extracts from scarce books ; some were MSS. of his puppet comedies ; but as he was in the habit of improvising nearly the whole dialogue, they were extremely threadbare. Lastly, some fragments of essays and MSS. of the "Prince of the Hundred Soups," dated 1838. I have forgotten to mention that the splendid puppet theatre, on which Mangia-Zucchero spent all his ingenuity and time, was bought for five thousand francs (paid to the hospital of Santo Spirito) by a man from Bologna, who travelled all over Italy with it, until, after two years' enormous success, the booth which contained it was burnt down completely, owing to an accident, during a rehearsal at Rovigo.

I must now say a few words about the story found among Theodor Wesendonk's papers, and which,

translated and slightly abridged, Mr. Unwin and myself are now putting before English readers ; also a few words concerning the comedy of masks, poor old Mangia-Zuccherò's craze, of which this story may be considered as the latest and probably the last outshoot. From the things told me by the bookseller, Spolverascaffali, and from the fragmentary essays which formed part of the packet of MSS. which he handed over to me, it is easy to reconstruct Wesendonk's theories ; theories of which "the Prince of the Hundred Soups" is the only remaining fruit. I must premise that Theodor Wesendonk's youth was influenced, like that of most Germans, and many Frenchmen (I need only mention among the latter, Charles Nodier, Prosper Mérimée, Théophile Gautier, and above all, George Sand), of the earlier half of this century, by the fantastic and humorous vagaries of certain eccentric romanticists, now, alas, half-forgotten : Jean Paul, Tieck, Zimmermann, Chamisso, and above all, Hoffman. To their appeal from what mankind in its dulness considers as important and interesting, the whimsical and imaginative brain of Wesendonk had quickly responded : as an actor and a dramatic author he had succeeded solely in the domain of the quaintly and humorously fantastic. The ill success of a pet

play of his own writing had drawn him off the stage, and, as I have reason to believe, for some years into a madhouse. Be this as it may, he had instinctively attributed this failure to the baneful influence of realism; and had instinctively sought consolation for his woes and incitement to revenge in the style of literature (if literature it can be called) most completely opposed to this realism.—“this puling, coffee-drinking, crinoline-wearing female fiend, Realism,” as he wrote in 1852. Such was the old Italian mask comedy. A comedy whose beginnings must be sought for in the grotesque buffoons of earliest antiquity, and whose end in the pantomimes and puppet-shows of our own days; and which, depending mainly upon the improvised jests and caperings of actors wearing the comical garments and mask of Harlequin, Pantaloon, Pierrot, Columbine, and a whole host of others, triumphed in Italy at a time when national literature was at its lowest, from the end of the sixteenth to the beginning of the seventeenth centuries. These times were, in themselves, highly comic, as the architecture, the poetry, and the art (especially the wonderful caricatures of Jacques Callot) abundantly prove. So that this Italian comedy of the masks, steeped in the grotesqueness of

Italian life of those days, naturally had a great attraction for many whimsical minds ; as, for instance, George Sand, who made her son write a whole book on the subject, and spent her leisure at Nohant presiding over puppet performances ; Théophile Gautier, who got from it all the fascinating, quaint background of his "Capitaine Fracasse ;" and Hoffman, whose story, called "Il Signor Formica," is a little masterpiece. As to poor Wesendonk, it simply made him crazy and philosophic. The comedy of masks, complicated with its child, the puppet-show, was to him the foundation of all drama and romance. "Only in the world of Harlequins and Pantaloons," he wrote, in a fragment entitled "Begriff einer neuen Aesthetik" (An Attempt at replacing all Previous Systems of Æsthetics), "can we really find that sovereign Idealism, serene and really creatively human, after which man is for ever striving ; only with the puppet-show can we get free from those psychological, political, and moralistic ideas which are really foreign to art." What the *creatively human* ("das Menschlich - Erzeugende") exactly means I will not stop to discuss ; suffice it that Wesendonk aspired to nothing less than revolutionizing all literature, dramatic and narrative, by basing it upon the Comedy of Masks, "the highest product

(die höchste Leistung) of the most æsthetically endowed of all nations." Given in a *précis*, and a *précis* by a person who does not entirely agree with them, the ideas of Wesendonk must needs appear very irrational; but it is quite extraordinary how, in reading his fragments, the sense of irrationality vanishes. The man, had he not been crazed, would have had the stuff of another Hegel in him.

One fragment is entitled, "Of Typicality." The fact of something being typical has given it (for reasons which I confess my inability to follow) in the eyes of German metaphysicians, and of Mr. Taine and sundry other French critics, an extraordinary artistic dignity; and this, to Wesendonk, was one great advantage of the Comedy of Masks. "In it alone," he writes, "can the type be obtained and preserved; in every other form of art its purity is for ever troubled by the individual and the fortuitous." For, in the old Italian comedy (and in the puppet-show also), there exist a certain number of fixed types, comic and serious, invariably dressing and feeling and speaking in the same way, and rendered interesting only by being placed in continually new positions. Thus (and this may help the understanding of "The Prince of the Hundred Soups") the silly, duped, good-

natured papa, the noodle of the piece, is always Pantalone, dressed in red and black Venetian robes; the plotting old villain is always Brighella, sometimes called Scappino (whence Molière's "Fourberies de Scapin"), and invariably dressed in black; the stupid and roguish servant, the sly clown, is the acrobat Harlequin in his stripes; the bully is the red-nosed Scaramuccia; the young lady is Giacinta, Rosaura, or Clelia; the lover, in full splendour of feathers and ribbons, Lelio, Valerio, or, as in "The Prince of the Hundred Soups," Leandro; finally, the waiting-maid is Harlequin's sweetheart, Colombina. These types are almost invariable, and the whole ingenuity of the play consists in bringing their various peculiarities into new, unexpected, and comical combinations. This will be sufficient explanation of the comic system by which Wesendonk hoped to renovate the whole dramatic literature of the world ("for," he adds, "high pathos exists only in the typic comedy") by raising it to the long sought Idealism. Well, the tale which its author called "Pantalone Doge," a title which I have ventured to replace by that of "The Prince of the Hundred Soups"—this tale is evidently intended as a proof that the high idealism of Pantaloon and Harlequin may with advantage be introduced not

merely into the drama, but into narrative fiction, to replace the realism of modern novels, which Wesendonk repeatedly stigmatises as "nauseous," "childish," "depraving," and "un-human."

It is not, however, with a view to converting mankind to Wesendonk's (otherwise Mangia-Zuccherò's) "New System of Æsthetics" that I have translated (abridging here and there where the love of typicality produced a certain monotony) and am now editing "The Prince of the Hundred Soups." Perhaps the interest I take in Mask Comedy, and my consequent power of investing Mangia-Zuccherò's personages with their quaint appearance, and ascribing to their movements and speeches the grotesque jerkiness and piping shrillness of puppets, may give "The Prince of the Hundred Soups" a charm for my own fancy which may not be intrinsic: I really feel that I am not a competent judge. But it seems to me a pity that any work which may possibly give pleasure should be utterly wasted; and I confess, moreover, to a sentimental reluctance that of all the passion and ingenuity of the poor old man nothing whatever should remain. He himself, you see, was a kind of amusing marionette of my childish days, and I feel loth to push his work aside, as I should feel loth to throw an old puppet, the

darling of my nursery days, into the fire. So I publish the tale, hoping not that it may convert æsthetes from blood-and-bones lyrism to the serenity of puppet-shows, but that it may perchance afford an hour's amusement to some little boy or girl as nice as the two long-legged foals to whom I have dedicated my editor's work ; or to some grown up simpleton as desultory and capricious as myself.

VERNON LEE.

FLORENCE,

Oct. 24, 1882.



The Prince of the Hundred Soups.

A PUPPET-SHOW IN NARRATIVE.

CHAPTER I.

IT was the morning of the first of the year one thousand six hundred and ninety-five. All the bells of the sixty-four churches and convents of Bobbio were ringing ; all the twenty-four cannons of Bobbio were banging on the bastions ; all the thirty thousand hearts of the thirty thousand

subjects of the Serene and Unvanquished Commonwealth of Bobbio were beating. The hostelrys were encumbered with the carts and mules of people who had driven in at day-break from the remotest parts of the state, a distance of a good twelve miles; the streets were lined by the hundred grenadiers and the hundred Swiss of the Commonwealth; while the celebrated horseless cavalry regiment, with their saddles on their shoulders, kept order in the great square before the palace of the senate, which was crowded with eager spectators. The forty senators of Bobbio had been locked up three days and three nights to elect among themselves a new Doge of Bobbio, a "*Dux inclytæ reipublicæ Bobbutorum*," as he was styled in Latin documents; a "*Magnifico Signore*," as he was denominated in Italian pro-

clamations ; a "Prince of the Hundred Soups," as he was called in common parlance, from the one hundred plates of soup prepared by the ducal cook, which it was his principal duty to consume during his hundred days' tenure of office, according to the habit dating from the time of Charlemagne. The senators, or, as they were called, the Signory, had now summoned the people to announce upon whom their choice had fallen ; and the people were waiting in intense excitement of curiosity ; for never in all the annals of Bobbio could there be found recorded a ducal election more lengthy and more stormy, although ducal elections had always been lengthy and stormy, and had always taken place regularly once every three months.

By midday the crowd, which had been stationed before the palace ever since the

earliest morning, was growing impatient and hungry and thirsty, although vendors of wine and salted pumpkin seeds had been elbowing all through their ranks. Suddenly there was a flourish of trumpets and a roll of drums, and every one became breathless; the doors of the great palace balcony opened, and on it appeared the venerable herald of the republic, dressed in scarlet and armorial embroideries, and preceded by two pages carrying trumpets with long streamers. The pages blew their trumpets, and the herald, advancing to the front of the balcony, announced in a loud, nasal voice that their High Mightinesses, the Senators of Bobbio, had elected as Dux Bobbutorum the Magnificent Lord Pantalone Busdrago I.

The crowd burst into loud applause, "Long live the Signory! Long live the Doge! Long

live Bobbio! Long live the Magnificent Pantalone Busdrago I.!"

The cries and yells reached far and wide, and reached the ears of the most noble Scappino Scappini, Count of Brighella, Generalissimo of the Republic, as he sat at his embroidery frame in the great hall of his palace. Had the lightning darted through the oaken roof and split through the marble floor before him, the Count Brighella, Generalissimo of the Republic, could not have given a more terrific start than when the name of Pantalone Busdrago struck upon his ears. Down crashed the embroidery frame, upon which he had been artistically working a scarlet tulip, and off, to the farthest corners of the room, rolled half a dozen balls of worsted, red and blue and green.

"Pantalone Busdrago!" cried the General.

issimo in a stifled voice. "Pantalone Busdrago ! he—he—Doge of Bobbio——!" And the words stuck in his throat, and he sank on to a chair, long, lank, and rigid, like a collapsed puppet, his black silk dressing-gown, fashioned out of an old senatorial robe, falling in stiff folds on either side of the high-carved chair back.

Pantalone Busdrago, Doge of Bobbio ! The Generalissimo's plans defeated ! his party routed ! all his insidious words, his insidious looks wasted ! all the hatred of years baffled in this way ! He, the shrewdest head in all Bobbio, the noblest of the old nobility, the inscrutable, invincible Scappino Brighella, defeated in this way by a fat and foolish upstart, the great-grandson of a sausage-maker, who had only twenty years before bought the nobility of Bobbio. Oh shame, sorrow, despair, wrath, vengeance !



"THE GENERALISSIMO STOOD GAZING UP AT THE FACE OF
UGOLINO BRIGHELLA."

And the Generalissimo started to his feet and paced the room with feverish rapidity. He stopped every now and then and looked round him at the faded and tattered hangings, at the furniture with straw stuffing bursting out of the stained torn brocade, at the blackened, wrinkled portraits, the portraits of his ancestors—of the noble Scappini, Counts of Brighella, in armour and peaked beards and doge's purple. That this should be the end of their family! that this unmitigated disgrace should be permitted in the city which they had upheld with sword and counsel ever since the days of Charlemagne! And the Generalissimo stood, erect and with folded arms, gazing up at the face of Ugolino Brighella, despot of Bobbio in the thirteenth century, who had conquered all the neighbouring states, and had made emperors and kings tremble

at his name, and now looked down, blank and yellow, upon the fallen fortunes of his house and upon his disconsolate descendant.

"After this," exclaimed Scappino Brighella, "the aristocracy of Bobbio must fall for ever, or else——," and he stopped, appalled at his own thought, "Bobbio must change, or it will cease to exist!" And he looked up for approval from the yellow, blank face, like that of a bonnet-block, of the despot of the thirteenth century. Thus he stood a moment in deep thought; then suddenly light flashed into his eyes, triumph lit up his face.

"I have it!" he exclaimed. "Pantalone Busdrago, we shall see which of us two is the stronger! Prince of the Hundred Soups, we shall see whether thou shalt eat thy hundredth soup!"



"THERE WAS A SOUND OF SUDDENLY DROPPED
BRAZEN UTENSILS."

p. 9.

He seized a bell on a table and rang violently. No one answered. He went to the door, opened it, and called, "Arlecchino!"

There was no answer, but only a nasal song met him from the court. He stepped out on to the cloistered balcony surrounding it, and called again. There was a sound of suddenly dropped brazen utensils, and a long, lithe figure, arrayed in tight-fitting parti-coloured hose and jerkins, with many a blotch and patch, let go a copper saucepan he had been scouring, and put his dark, threatening head out of the kitchen window looking on to the court.

"Excellency?" he asked.

"Come hither, Arlecchino," ordered the Generalissimo, with dignity. The swarthy, lank fellow pulled off his kitchen apron and ran up the steps, turning a somersault as he

did so, from sheer animal spirits and natural dexterity of constitution. He appeared before the Generalissimo cap in hand, and bowed deeply.

"Come hither, Arlecchino," said the Count Brighella, beckoning him into a dark study, fitted up with carved oak and hung with gilded pig's-leather.

Arlecchino entered and shut the door behind him.

"Arlecchino," said the Generalissimo, seated gravely in a high-backed chair, "thou knowest that I have ever been a good master to thee even from thy infancy. I have protected thee from those who would have hanged thee for a thief and a murderer. Thou art now the only remaining bravo in all Bobbio—thou alone, despite the persecutions of the police ; and what

thou art thou owest to me. Now I require a return from thy fidelity."

The swarthy face of the bravo lit up with a smile of pleasure, mixed with a sort of stupid cunning. "Command me, I will do everything, Excellency," he answered; and his hand mechanically sought for the handle of the large kitchen knife stuck through his leathern belt.

"Listen then, Arlecchino," said Count Brighella, "and remember, if a word of this ever escape thee, thou shalt be hanged the very next morning. This is a matter which requires activity and adroitness, and, above all, silence."

Arlecchino bowed. The Generalissimo beckoned to him to approach. "Dost thou know Master Fritello, the cook of the Signory?" he asked.

"I do," answered the bravo. "Your Excellency means a little fat, round man, who——"

"Yes, yes—well, mark this. He is not to cook any more; at least, for a good long while. Dost thou understand?"

Arlecchino's face broadened into a grin.

"But no scandal, no violence, mind that," said the Generalissimo; "no blood spilt, above all. It will suffice if he be so unwell tomorrow that he be forced to send in his resignation. Mark that, he must resign voluntarily. I leave it in thy hands."

"He is now out at his farm, on account of the leisure of the interregnum," mused Arlecchino. "I will upset his gig as he returns home this evening. His horse shies easily. At all events a couple of kicks are never wasted. Reckon as if he were already despatched, Excellency."

"Good," answered the Generalissimo; "but this is only half the business. We must get another to replace him. Dost thou know of a good cook in want of a place? He need not be very good, but he ought to be impressionable, easily frightened."

"There is the hunchback. Your Excellency perhaps knows him? He served the late senator, Ottavio Zanni! He is very devout—sees visions sometimes. St. Francis appeared to him last December. I think he would do."

"Very good," replied the Generalissimo. "Then listen." And he lowered his voice to a whisper so slight that only the sharp ears of Arlecchino could have heard it.

When the faithful bravo, his kitchen knife stuck in his belt and his cap in hand, had bowed and turned head over heels (which he always

did in bowing) out of the room, the Generalissimo walked to the open window, rubbing his hands in high glee.

He looked out, up and down the street, whose windows and balconies were decorated with carpets and draperies, while garlands of box, set with artificial flowers, hung from cresset and torchholder. He could see the crowd in the palace square, the sheen of the breastplates of the Swiss guard, the banners of the guilds; he could hear the crowd still shouting for the new Doge, Pantalone Busdrago.

Count Brighella smiled as he looked on. "Prince of the Hundred Soups," he muttered between his teeth, "we shall see whether thou wilt swallow thy hundredth soup."

And he shut the window with a triumphant bang.



CHAPTER II.

MEANWHILE, unconscious of the mysterious storm which was brewing in the Generalissimo's kitchen Pantalone Busdrago, first Doge of his name, was giving a grand entertainment at his palace the last which he could give before entering on his ducal functions.

A string of immense gilded coaches, with cherubs, armorial bearings, and all manner of devices painted and sculptured on their panels,

was drawn up in the little square before the Busdrago palace : a magnificent structure, brilliant with whitewash, in the most gorgeous architecture of the day, with columns like piled cheeses, sustaining vases filled with plastic fire, and broken arches bound with stucco garlands and inhabited by stucco virtues. Over the entrance door two Cupids upheld the escutcheon of the Busdrago family, with the marquis's coronet (bought for five thousand crowns from the Duke of Massa Carrara) and the arms : in a field of gules an azure dragon (Draco), covered with silver stars, eating a golden ox (Bos) ; the two together constituting the arms of the Busdrago, or Bos Draconis family, as elaborated by the chief herald of Bobbio.

The running footmen, with ribbons on their shoulders and long flying sleeves, waved their

torches by the coach sides ; the pages in scarlet and blue and silver jumped down from the back of the vehicles, where they clustered by threes, and opened the doors to let out foreign ambassadors covered with golden collars and parti-coloured ribbons, and senators in black robes and furred caps, and officers in breastplates and high-plumed hats, and cardinals in scarlet, and prelates in purple, and last, but not least, ladies, superb in proud rouged beauty and stiff stomachers embroidered with pearls, their satin and brocade trains upheld by little curled pages, leaning on the arm of their *cavaliere servente* in chief, and surrounded by a constellation of minor *cavalieri serventi*, carrying their fan, their handkerchief, their nosegay, or their smelling bottle. Upstairs, in the great reception-rooms, an immense crowd was already moving about

among the magnificent furniture, the gilding and stuccoing, and the superb liveries, all new, brand new, as was everything belonging to the Magnificent Pantalone Busdrago.

And there was His Magnificence in person—a round, fat, restless little man, perpetually cheerful and merry ; his enemies said that his constant good humour and high spirits, his plump and active person, were signs of low birth ; and so, perhaps, they were. Be it as it may, the new Doge contrasted strangely with the lantern-jawed, solemn, pompous dignitaries who surrounded him. The fact was that Pantalone Busdrago was overflowing with happiness, bursting with prosperity. He could have danced for joy at having been elected Doge at last, but he knew that would show his base extraction, so he tried to repress his glee, and to assume a

serious and rather melancholy air, in which, however, he could not succeed. All the ambassadors, cardinals, and grandees were congratulating him upon his election ; mostly with real pleasure, on account of his money, his generosity, and his good humour. But there were a few senators whose congratulations were peculiarly frigid and forced. They had tried to prevent his being elected ; they belonged to the aristocratic party, headed by the Generalissimo Brighella, which had been so signally defeated. After the congratulations were ended, all the poets in Bobbio came forward and read innumerable copies of verses in honour of the new Doge, in which he was compared to Jupiter, Mars, the sun, moon, stars ; and Fame was invariably invited to blow her trumpet for his benefit. After that the curtain of a little theatre

erected in the palace court was raised, and there came forward sundry nymphs in striped satin petticoats and pink silk stockings, with crooks in their hands, and wreaths on their heads, and sundry ancient heroes, in blonde wigs, plumed morions and sandals, who performed a pastoral in music, singing the praises of a mysterious shepherd, Glaucus, the richest and wisest shepherd of Arcadia, the beloved of the Gods, whom every one understood to be Pantalone Busdrago; the whole to the accompaniment of excellent symphonies of harpsichords, viols, lutes, and flutes.

After the pastoral there was a grand supper, Pantalone Busdrago sitting at the head of the table, between the Dowager Grand Duchess of Guastalla and his own beautiful daughter, Giacinta, magnificently dressed in violet and

gold brocade, which showed off her auburn curls and black eyes to perfection. But beautiful as looked Giacinta Busdrago at the supper table, it was not till the fiddles had come in and the ball begun that she shone to full advantage, making all the other ladies, though fair, seem like glowworms by the side of the noonday sun. They danced *courantes* and *allemandes* and stately minuets, all the noble youths crowding round the new Doge's beautiful daughter. With all she was courteous and cheerful, but disdainful of their words of admiration and passion, trampling royally upon the noblest hearts in Bobbio. With one, however, she was neither courteous nor cheerful ; she turned her back rudely to him without answering his greeting. He was a stately youth, with long fair curls and languishing blue eyes ; of slender

and graceful figure, beautifully dressed in long pale yellow waistcoat and olive embroidered coat, with purple knots at his knees and on his shoes, and purple feathers on laced hat ; a gallant and discreet young man, made to charm the hearts of ladies. But he was Leandro Scappini, son of the Generalissimo Brighella, the avowed enemy of Giacinta Busdrago's father, and as such a sworn enemy of Giacinta herself.

Now it so happened that in this ball every lady received a nosegay entirely composed of the same flowers, which she distributed to the cavaliers with whom she condescended to dance, as a token of recognition and a pledge to fulfil her promise. Some of the ladies had nosegays of carnations, others of roses, others of orange blossoms, and various other sweet-smelling

flowers ; that of Giacinta Busdrago was of yellow jasmine. At the beginning of the ball all the gentlemen crowded round her, each asking for a flower. And to each she gave one, until there remained only a few sprigs in her hand. At that time up came Leandro Scappini, and made a low bow, casting at the same time a wrathful glance at Giacinta. Every one looked on in wonder at what would happen, for there never passed an opportunity of Leandro saying something sneering to Giacinta, and Giacinta responding rudely to Leandro.

On this occasion Leandro made a bow of mock courtesy, and in a voice of mock humility asked, pointing to the jasmine in her hand—

“Has the daughter of the Magnificent Pantalone Busdrago no flower for the son of Scappino Brighella?”

Giacinta glanced up scornfully at Leandro, who stood with a jaunty, conquering air before her.

She slowly unrolled the paper confining the few remaining jasmynes, carefully extricated them, and then handed to the confused and astonished gallant the little damp, ragged paper.

"You may wear this for my sake, sir," she said scornfully, and swept away, leaving the crestfallen Leandro to beat a retreat amidst the laughter of the bystanders.

Leandro Scappini retreated precipitately through the crowd of dancers, got out of the palace into the street, and in a few moments reached the palace of his father. He hastened up to his room, lit a candle, and locked the door. Then he drew from his breast the damp, crumpled piece of paper which had brought so much derision upon him, turned it round, kissed

and re-kissed it, and then, having carefully smoothed it out, held it close to the flame of the candle. In a few seconds dark marks began to appear on the paper, and in about ten minutes they had turned into legible writing, into a letter which ran thus :—

“Leandro, you are a fool, and I am growing sick of your stupid and cowardly vacillation. Do you want to marry me or not? If you do, be a man for once and face your old tyrant of a father. I believe you are as afraid of him as when you were a baby. If he were *my* father he should soon learn with whom he has to deal. I am sure he is up to some mischief against poor papa. If you could only summon up one grain of spirit we would make him cede. Papa would agree, although he hates you. I cannot go on waiting your pleasure like this. I have already

done poor papa a great injury by refusing the Senator Scaramuccia, who is now our mortal enemy. And all this for the sake of a wretched creature like you. Your GIACINTA."

Signor Leandro read and re-read this note, sighed, rose, paced up and down, and said to himself, "She is right, I am a fool and a sneak. I must make an end of all this." And he began to muse over his evil fate.

Leandro felt hurt in his dignity as a man and a soldier ; for he was the colonel of the cavalry of the republic ; that is to say, of a regiment of horse of which the riders carried the saddles on their shoulders when on parade, as symbolical of the steeds which had died many years before, and never been replaced ; a regiment which had done excellent service against the Turks in Hungary, under the command of the Generalis-

simo Brighella. Leandro had the pride of a soldier, and felt hurt at being thus twitted by a girl, and at having to endure such a public insult as that he had just sustained ; he was ashamed of not being master of his own actions, of having to play at hide-and-seek with his feelings, at having to slink away from under his father's glance. He determined to be independent once for all ; to boldly go up to Pantalone Busdrago and demand of him the hand of his daughter. The difficulty was to do so without the knowledge of his terrible father. How could he find an opportunity ? Perhaps the Generalissimo might go for a day or two into the country to see that the agent did not cheat as to the corn or the wine. Then Leandro might act boldly. Yes—he would do that. He would go up to Busdrago, and say—what would he say?—

something to the effect that he was resolved to marry his daughter? And if Busdrago refused, or at least delayed, and the Generalissimo came up in the meanwhile? O heavens! Leandro could never run into the jaws of such danger! He was his own master however; his father could not control his actions; and as to disinheriting him, why, what inheritance was there? a crumbling palace, rotting furniture, just enough sour wine and thin oil for the family use; the husband of the greatest heiress in Bobbio could well afford to lose all that. Nor could his father lock him up, nor beat him, nor send him into exile. There was in reality nothing to fear. Yes, he would act; he would show Giacinta that he was not afraid of his father, that he was not the vacillating creature she imagined; he would show those insolent jackanapeses who had stood

laughing at his supposed discomfiture that Leandro Scappini could get more difficult prizes than jasmine sprigs. Leandro had placed himself before the dim, cracked, dusty pier-glass, and was pursuing these noble thoughts while contemplating his image, erect and firm, one hand on his hip, the other complacently stroking his handsome chin and lip, pulling imaginary moustachios, which the taste of the time forbade him to wear, when, suddenly, steps were heard in the lobby, and a sharp, decided voice called from without, "Leandro!"

Leandro darted forward, unbolted the door, and appeared on the threshold, pale and bewildered, before his father. The Generalissimo was wrapped in a dark robe, and shaded a tallow candle with one hand, while with the other he held a small bundle.

"Put on these things at once," he said, placing the bundle on a table. His son, quaking internally, unrolled it and took out a black robe and maskhood, similar to those of a penitent of some confraternity.

"Put them on at once," ordered the Generalissimo. Leandro obeyed passively ; buttoned the straight black robe, and slipped the hood over his head, only his eyes remaining visible through the slits.

"Now come," said the Generalissimo, taking Leandro's arm, and leading him along the lobby.

"I hear that that little minx of a daughter of Busdrago has insulted you this evening. Ah, we shall soon be revenged on the whole pack of them."

Leandro's heart sank within him, but he made no attempt at resistance or explanation.



CHAPTER III.

WHILE the noble folk of Bobbio were dancing and making merry at the reception of the new Doge, a mysterious incident was taking place in one of the remoter parts of the city. Master Truffaldino, usually called the *Gobbo*, or hunchback, ex-cook of the late Senator Ottavio Zanni, was quietly wending his way homewards from the Busdrago palace, where he had been called in to lend a hand in preparing the supper. He took a short

cut, avoiding the main streets of the town, and skirting the ramparts, through many a little blind alley and quiet lane. The moon was in and out among white, buff-tinted clouds ; the night was still and drowsy, with alternations of bright light and complete darkness. Somehow or other it depressed the Gobbo's spirits, and led him to melancholy thoughts. As he was passing along a narrow paved street, shut in between the walls of a garden on the one side and those of a convent on the other—a high square belfry, its rows of slender pillarets and fretted bell-loft, white against the bright blue sky, closing in the view ;—as he was walking along, suddenly he thought he heard steps behind him, pit-a-pat along the pavement. It first surprised, then worried, then fascinated his sensitive and imaginative mind ; he felt a long-

ing to look behind him, and at the same time an incomprehensible dread of so doing. The sound was becoming intolerable. At length Master Truffaldino screwed up his courage, and turned round to see who it might be. No one. Nothing but the long blank line of walls on either side, a tree overtopping that of the garden, and the moonlight white upon everything. Strange! he had heard footsteps. The matter made him uneasy, and he quickened his pace uncomfortably. The moonlight was in and out, now playing with the branches of the trees and the columns of the belfry, now leaving all in darkness. At one moment the Gobbo thought he saw a figure in the bell-loft—it might or might not be. Then, from some neighbouring place, he heard a bleating as of a sheep or goat. He remembered what he had heard from his

grandmother about Master Curtio, the magician who was burnt in effigy in the year 1599, and of his expeditions through the air on a ram. The poor Gobbo was getting very fidgetty. Again he heard the steps behind him ; he was now at the end of the blind alley. The bleating was repeated, together with sundry strange sounds—whines, grunts, he knew not what. Master Curtio must certainly be out to-night ; so the Gobbo took to his heels and dashed up on to the ramparts. In the open space he thought he would feel safer. But as he was scrambling up on to the bastions, a gigantic white figure with flaming eyes rose up from behind a tree, and caught him by the cloak. Truffaldino shrieked in agony, gasped, tried to speak to call upon the saints, but his voice stuck in his throat. The apparition, its terrible flaming eyes fixed upon

him, held him by the collar, and administered two or three vigorous kicks into his sides. Truffaldino groaned and tried to call out ; but suddenly he was plunged in darkness. A something thick and heavy intercepted his sight ; he closed his eyes in agony and resigned himself. Then he felt a violent jerk, as if he were being thrown up into the air ; after which he was rapidly borne away. Whither ? and how ? On and on, Heaven knows for how long. The unfortunate hunchback lay half fainting, surrounded by darkness, muttering snatches of prayers all confused together. Master Curtio the wizard had taken him ; they were flying through the air, skimming the corn which the peasants would find seared the next morning, as it always was beneath the hoofs of Curtio's ram. They were flying through the country for

miles and miles towards that terrible hollow in the mountains where the devil was wont to appear with the legs of a cock. Truffaldino understood it all. Holy Virgin! All the saints and martyrs defend him! He vowed candles and silver images to all the altars in Bobbio. Suddenly there was a thump; they had stopped. They had got to the hollow, to the witches' meeting-place. He was to be fried by the witches and wizards, enchanted candles were to be made out of him. He shrieked with terror. At that moment the darkness was removed from his sight, and he was set on his feet on the firm ground, two more mysterious kicks accompanying the action. He stood dazed and blinded, and crossing himself and sinking on his knees. Little by little he regained his sight, and discovered that he was in the middle of a large

hall, dimly lit by a chandelier in the middle, all the extremities hid in gloom. Before him was a table covered with a dark cloth, and behind it sat three figures, robed and cowed in black, with only their eyes shining through the holes in their hoods. Truffaldino trembled harder than ever, and crossed himself more than before, grovelling feebly on the ground. One of the figures gave a demoniac laugh, which went through the marrow of the Gobbo's bones ; but the middle figure waved his hand with a gesture of silencing, and spoke in strange, unearthly tones.

“Master Truffaldino, attend,” he said. “Know that this night will be thy good fortune or thy utter ruin. If thou reveal a word of what has passed and shall pass, although thou shouldst say it to a confessor, a tree, or a dead wall, it

will be instantly known to us, and thou shalt expiate thy indiscretion by death sudden and more horrible than any yet imagined. Swear that thou wilt keep silence." And the long, black figure rose and pointed at the hunchback's breast the shining muzzle of a large embossed pistol.

"I swear, I swear—to all the saints and the Madonna," gasped the Gobbo, convulsively, and clasping his hands. "Have pity on me! I will be silent! only spare me!"

The figure in black put down the weapon and reseated himself.

"To-morrow morning," he proceeded, "the Major-domo of the Signory will call for thee and offer thee the place of cook of the commonwealth. Do thou accept, and follow implicitly our orders."

At this announcement the Gobbo looked up in amazement. What! it was not the wizard Curtio! He was in the presence of that mysterious council whose name might never be whispered, which all knew to exist, but whose existence was too awful to be avowed. Truffaldino's teeth chattered at the recollection of the vague stories of men found drowned in the river, or hanged to trees, or stabbed in their beds, with the terrible initials of the council upon their corpses.

"Know," went on the black-robed one, "that the cook of the Signory is the mysterious agent of Heaven; that on his head weighs a strange responsibility; that he is the receiver of an ancient and terrible tradition, which it is death to reveal. Never must he cook save the sacred food of the Doge; no mortal save the Doge may

taste that food ; the Doge may never, as long as Doge he be, eat aught else. One hundred soups must be eaten by every Doge of Bobbio ; soup which is to accompany, and be an ingredient of, every other dish ; soup of which this is the venerable, holy recipe, transmitted to us from the earliest ages of the commonwealth ; a recipe which dares not be revealed under penalty of death."

And he drew from a carved casket a little square of parchment, antique and weird-looking, which he kissed thrice. The two other masked figures approached, and forced the Gobbo on to his knees, while the spokesman handed him the terrible parchment.

He took it all trembling, and stuffed it into his bosom.

"Remember!" cried the masked one in an awful tone.

At that moment Truffaldino felt himself thrown on his face by a violent kick ; all became dark ; he heard once more the strange cackling laugh, and he was again borne off in darkness.

All this was too much for the Gobbo's feelings, and he swooned away. When he recovered consciousness, he was lying in bed—in his own bed, in his own room, in his own house. What had happened ! He looked round, made sure he was really awake, really in his room. Yes, there could be no doubt ; he was lying dressed on his bed. The door was locked—locked on the inside ; he alone could have locked it. All that had happened must have been a hideous nightmare ; perhaps he had eaten something that disagreed with him in the Busdrago's kitchen. Yes, it must be so. At that moment

there came a rap at the door. The Gobbo sprang off his bed and opened it. He started back in amazement. There stood one of the Swiss guard of the palace, in blue and yellow slashed jerkin and shining helmet, a halberd in his hand.

"Truffaldino?" he asked laconically.

"Truffaldino, your servant," answered the Gobbo, terrified.

"Come with me," said the Swiss.

The Gobbo, in his disordered dress, followed. Was he being taken to prison? No; they crossed the square and made for the palace of the Signory, rising dark and battlemented against the pale morning sky, with its tall red belfry by its side. Truffaldino followed the Swiss, with a beating heart, through the guard-room and immense corridors, to an ante-chamber, where they were met by a page, to

whom the Swiss duly consigned the Gobbo. The page opened a door and lifted a curtain. They were in a large room, luxuriously furnished ; on one side was a table covered with papers and ledgers, at which sat a young man in black, with white bands. Near the window was a toilet table, before which stood a barber, elaborately curling the long black curls of a portly youngish cavalier seated, elegantly draped in a lace gown, before the mirror. On the hunchback entering, he turned round, scanned Truffaldino with a contemptuous look of amusement, and said—

“ Well, little hunchy, canst thou cook ? ”

“ Truffaldino bowed low ; he recognized the Senator Scaramuccia, a descendant of Julius Cæsar on his mother’s side, and Major-domo of the Signory.

"Canst thou cook?" asked the senator; and then tossed a paper to his secretary, saying, "Read him the agreement." And he began to hum an opera air in his gruff, would-be sweet voice.

"His Excellency desires to know," said the secretary, gravely, "whether you, Master Truffaldino, usually called the Gobbo, &c., &c., are ready and willing to accept the supreme honour of becoming cook to the Signory?"

Truffaldino turned ashy pale, his knees trembled; his dream, his terrible nightmare returned to him.

"Ready and willing and but too highly honoured," he stammered.

The secretary proceeded to fumble among his papers. The Senator Major-domo Scaramuccia, descended from Julius Cæsar, kept his eyes fixed

on the droll figure of the Gobbo, pale, and dishevelled ; then he burst into a loud cackling laugh. It cut into Truffaldino's nerves. When had he heard that laugh before ? The secretary gave him a paper to sign, bade him enter on his duties the next morning, and made him a sign to withdraw, while the Senator Scaramuccia continued singing between his teeth, as one black curl after the other was drawn off the barber's iron.

How Truffaldino got out of the palace Heaven only knows, for all his ideas were in a flutter. He ran home, rushed upstairs, locked himself in his room, and fumbled in the bosom of his jerkin. With trembling hands he drew forth a square, folded piece of yellow parchment. He unfolded it, and glanced with amazement at the contents : a recipe in antique writing, with

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many a mysterious abbreviation, and strange, weird x's, and cabalistic figures. His dream had been a reality !





CHAPTER IV.

THE Magnificent Pantalone Busdrago entered upon his ducal functions. He left his own mansion, and was installed in the Doge's apartments of the public palace. It was a gloomy suite of rooms, furnished in the hardest dignified style, with oaken ceilings, oaken chairs, oaken tables, everything solemn, sombre, and rusty. Compared with the luxurious rooms of the Busdrago palace, with their brand-new silk furniture and profuse gild-

ing and bright frescoes, it was in the highest degree dismal and uncomfortable. In these rooms the Dux Bobbolorum was confined by etiquette and by force ; two pages sate in the ante-chamber ; four Swiss held watch in the guard-room ; there was no possibility of the Doge going out, or of any one coming in, without the express order of the Senator Major-domo. For the republic of Bobbio was the most jealous and suspicious state existing ; a Doge it must have, but it arranged matters in such a way that he should be wholly unable to stir a finger. The Doge could receive visits only in the presence of a senator, and he could go out only in state, in one of the wondrous gilt coaches of the republic. No one was permitted to share the ducal meal, but some dignitary was occasionally present while he partook of it.

The life of the Dux Bobbolorum was, therefore, the most uncomfortable and dreary that could possibly be conceived ; but such was the ambition of men, that every one of the forty senators was mad to become Doge, and ready to squander his fortune and massacre his neighbours in order to obtain this honour. To be Doge was the crowning success, the only missing happiness of Pantalone Busdrago's ever successful and ever happy life. He had the largest fortune, the most magnificent estates, the most splendid villa, the most superb palace, liveries, kitchen, cellar, picture-gallery, chapel of musicians, horses, carriages, and dogs, in all Bobbio ; he had the most beautiful daughter, the best constitution of body, the happiest temper of mind, and now—he was Doge. When Pantalone Busdrago sat down for the first time on the

hard chair in the dingy ducal room, he felt as if in paradise ; he could have kissed and hugged the very pages and guard who watched before his door ; nay, one of the valets later affirmed that having peeped through the keyhole, as the valets of the Signory were in duty bound to do, in order to prevent treason, he had seen the new Doge standing before the mirror in his long rose-coloured satin robe, smiling and laughing for joy, and finally dancing up and down the room in triumph.

Pantalone's heart beat when he sat down solitary at the ducal table to eat the first of his hundred soups ; round him, to celebrate the event, stood the forty senators of Bobbio in their black gowns and furred caps, looking on gravely. If Pantalone Busdrago's head had not been reeling with pride and joy, he

might perhaps have noticed a smile on the face of his arch-enemy the Generalissimo Brighella, a smile of strange and evil import. But the new Doge was thinking only of his soup and of the way he ought to take it. He would have gulped it down all at once, but restrained himself, and tried to eat it gravely, sedately, as if he had eaten nothing else all his life long. But he felt the forty pairs of senatorial eyes upon him, and his hand trembled ; he took up too much soup in his spoon and spilled some of it over his lace ruffle ; then, all crimson with shame, he took so little that he carried the spoon almost empty to his lips ; his face more deeply suffused, the veins of his forehead distended, he looked into his plate, hoping to see its embossed bottom ; but no bottom was visible as yet. He spooned away convulsively

at it ; at last the long-desired embossed work became visible ; he sighed and regained courage. At last he had got to the last spoonful. Victory ! he had eaten the first of his hundred soups ! He rose from table radiant. He was now really the Doge !

The next day he hoped matters would go more easily ; there were fewer senators present, and he had gained practice. But, although he began more calmly, it now struck him that the soup had a peculiar and vaguely disagreeable taste, he could not tell of what. He felt ashamed of thinking it disagreeable, and blushed internally at the thought that it was doubtless his baser origin, his coarser plebeian palate, which was at fault. Even the gods had to grow accustomed to the taste of ambrosia, and Pantalone Busdrago was well aware that

he was a divinity of very recent creation. Strange to say, the third day brought no improvement, nor did the fourth, nor the fifth ; on the contrary, the strange unaccountable flavour seemed to become more and more strongly marked. It was a desperate case. On the sixth day Pantalone's spirits sank within him on perceiving how little nature had fitted him to be a prince, and to eat ducal soups. He wondered whether the Doges, his predecessors, had disliked their food as much as he did ; he was seized with a morbid longing to question one of them on the subject. He tried one afternoon to bring round the conversation to the subject of the soup, hoping that the old senator Bertoldo, who had been twice Doge, and had five hundred Doges in his family, might shed some light on the subject. He began, therefore, by praising

the ducal soup, remarking on its exquisite flavour.

"Humph!" answered old Bertoldo, with the indifference of long habit, "duc al soup is no better and no worse than any other."

"Does His Magnificence find that it has any peculiar flavour?" asked the Generalissimo Brighella, fixing his great hawk's eyes on the rosy face of Pantalone.

His Magnificence was taken aback. Confound that Brighella, must he always turn up at the wrong moment! and yet he, Pantalone had paid him a nice round sum for the ruins of his ancestral castle, when he bought the ground to build his great villa. Pantalone regained his self-command however, and answered, "Oh, no peculiar taste, whatever."

"I thought Your Magnificence had just re-

marked that it was not like the soup—which which is eaten in ordinary houses,” answered the Generalissimo with exquisite deference.

Pantalone Busdrago could have seized Brighella by the collar, if Doges were permitted such acts of violence. What! he had perceived that the ducal soup did not please the plebeian palate, he had insinuated that no such soup had ever before been tasted by a Busdrago? But Pantalone's rage died away before the triumphant reflection that although the soup was sour and his enemies bitter, he, Pantalone Busdrago, had yet achieved his object in life, and was really and truly Prince of the Hundred Soups.



CHAPTER V.

RANTALONE BUSDRAGO'S reign began with a financial and diplomatic negotiation of extreme importance and difficulty, the success of which could not but shed unwonted lustre on his tenure of power ; and which is duly registered, with full details, in the Bobbian annals of the year 1695.

The citizens of Bobbio had, during a preceding reign, petitioned the Signory to create a new tax, lasting five years, of the tenth of a

piece of copper, on every ounce of snuff that was sold in the state, as their ancestors taxed themselves on the salt in order to raise the great Gothic cathedral. The object of this voluntary taxation had been on the present occasion to raise the money to engage for the theatre of the commonwealth, during the great fair of Saint Draislilianus, the most illustrious singer, male or female, that Italy could boast. The five years had now expired, the money had been raised, and the Signory, by an unanimous vote, had decided that, as the most illustrious living singer had been stipulated for, overtures should be made to the celebrated Signora Olimpia Fantastici. Accordingly a commission of senators, chosen among the youngest and best-looking, had been despatched to the Signora, then at the court of Cibò Malaspina, in

order to treat as to time and terms. Pantalone Busdrago's election had happened two days after the departure of the commission, and the first week of his reign was entirely taken up in receiving and answering the long despatches drawn up by the chief ambassador after every interview with the lady, the greatest, most beautiful, but also most fantastic and unruly singer in the world. At first Signora Olimpia Fantastici totally declined receiving any overtures at all ; then she demanded one-third more ducats than the tax on snuff had produced in five years ; then she manifested a desire to have the great opera-house rebuilt, as she had been told it was draughty. The ambassadors were in despair, the Doge and the senate at their wits' ends ; the people, usually the most loyal and pacific, were growing irritated at the delay.

Finally one day, as the senate had assembled to discuss how best to break the bad news to the people, the sound of a horn was heard and the gallop of a horse on the square below ; a minute later a courier, booted and spurred and covered with dust and foam, rushed into the council-hall, and, sinking exhausted on his knees, handed the Doge a letter. Pantalone Busdrago seized it with trembling fingers, and all the senators, forgetting rules and dignity, crowded round eagerly on tiptoe, jostling and squeezing each other. In a faltering voice the Doge read the contents. Victory ! The commonwealth had triumphed ! That very morning Signora Olimpia Fantastici had sent for the ambassador in chief and declared that she would come for the proposed sum (as raised by the aforesaid tax on snuff), without any further con-

dition than that the commonwealth should dismiss the principal male performer, the composer, scene-painter, candle-lighter, all of whom were to be replaced at her choice; and further, that she should be left to decide the day and hour when she should first enchant the ears and hearts of the Bobbians. Finally, that she would arrive the very next evening. The good news was instantly ordered to be published by the public criers, and all the citizens were requested to illuminate their windows, which, indeed, they would have spontaneously done, out of sheer joy.

Only one person was there who, in the midst of universal jubilation, had the stumps of his tallow candles set in front of his windows, and the scrapings of his fryingpan emptied into the wrought-iron cresset, with no pleasant emotion

in his breast ; and this one person was the Generalissimo Scappino Brighella. It is, indeed, only fair to mention that as the fortunes of the house of Brighella had somewhat fallen, it was annoying to a prudent man to see such a waste of candle ends and grease ; but we have reason for believing that the displeasure of the great statesman had even weightier grounds. He had naturally hoped that the negotiations with Signora Olimpia Fantastici would end unsuccessfully, and that this discomfiture would cast much odium on the new Doge ; their success was, therefore, an extreme mortification to him. However, his mortification soon gave way to hope, when he remembered the character of singers in general and of this lady in particular, which would try the patience of the most expert statesman ; and Pantalone Busdrago, he well

knew, was no statesman all. Nay, pondering over the matter, it appeared to him that what had at first seemed a reverse to himself and his party might, with a very little trouble, be converted into a triumph. So true is it that genius can turn evil into good. With a face radiant with inspiration, he ordered additional candle stumps to be brought up and more grease to be collected ; he even amused himself watching the lithe and swarthy Arlecchino clambering deftly on the window sills and balancing himself upon the torch-holders, as the dexterous and faithful bravo arranged the candles and grease pots for the illumination. Then he turned to his embroidery frame, and began working with all his might.

All day and all night did the Generalissimo sit at his embroidery frame, scorning rest and

food in his feverish work, and by the evening of the next day he had finished two of the most exquisite satin slippers, fit for the feet of Cinderella, on which were embroidered in coloured silk two Cupids, one holding a lyre, the other a roll of music, with the initials O. F. surrounded by a laurel crown. He looked at his work with the satisfaction of a great artist and murmured—

“They are too small for her or for any woman; but that’ll flatter her all the more. I know the heart of woman! Ah, Pantalone Busdrago, there is more in the workbox of Scappino Brighella than thou hast ever dreamed of!”

At that moment there was a sound of military music, a flash of torches. The procession of the nobility, which had gone to meet the singer

two miles outside the gate, was returning. He went to the window. An immense train of musicians and servants in livery, of magnificent coaches, with torches and banners, was passing through the street. In the middle was a travelling coach, hermetically closed, every curtain down and every window shut, and literally covered with the roses which were being thrown from all the windows. Round it rode all the noblest youths and maidens of Bobbio, headed by Giacinta Busdrago, radiant on a cream-coloured palfrey trapped with purple and gold.

The procession passed amidst loud shouts of welcome; but the Generalissimo was too absorbed in his thoughts to notice it, or to reflect upon the odd taste of Signora Olimpia Fantastici preferring to make her triumphal entry

in a hermetically closed and completely dark vehicle.

Half an hour later the door opened, and Leandro Scappini rushed in in great excitement, his fair locks dishevelled, his hat awry.

"What has happened, Leandro?" asked the Generalissimo, sternly.

His son stopped and, in hurried and confused words, narrated how, on the procession reaching the ducal palace, and the Doge descending the steps to welcome the great singer, no answer had issued from the closed coach; how it had finally been opened, and there had appeared, not the beautiful Olimpia, but a bundle of wraps, a cage with a parrot, a dog, a cat, and a tame monkey, which had grasped the extended hand of the astounded Doge.

"O Providence, how thou favourest wisdom

66 *THE PRINCE OF THE HUNDRED SOUPS.*

when devoted to the chastisement of upstarts!" exclaimed the Generalissimo Brighella, clasping his hands in an agony of joy.





CHAPTER VI.

WHEN the noble senators and ladies assembled before the palace of the commonwealth had recovered from their stupefaction, their wrath and frenzy on discovering that they had been escorting only a bundle of wraps, a cat, a dog, a parrot, and an ape, and Pantalone Busdrago had retired, livid with shame and rage at having extended his ducal hand to a monkey ; when, in short, the feelings of the assembly were somewhat calmed,

news was brought that one hour before there had arrived at the hostelry of the "Sword of Orlando" a one-horse chaise, from which had alighted a lady who was no other than the Signora Olimpia Fantastici. The eccentric siren had heard of the honours with which she was to be met, and had forthwith got out with her maid at the last stopping-place on the way, and, hiring a chaise, had left her cumbersome travelling carriage to pursue its way till it was met by the splendid procession of painted coaches and ladies and gentlemen on horse-back.

When the nobles of Bobbio heard this they quivered with anger, the senators turned pale with impotent rage, and the Magnificent Pantalone Busdrago felt the most violent desire to sign the death warrant of Signora Olimpia, or

at least to have her cast into the subterranean dungeon of the palace. But Doge and senate and nobles were forced to stifle their anger ; for what Doge, senate, or nobles—nay, what king, emperor, or pope, had ever coped successfully with *Olimpia Fantastici* ? Had not threats been her laughing-stock ? Had she not snapped her fingers at armies ? Had she not baffled police ? Had she not passed through every door, however well locked, and through every window, however well grated ? Had she not trampled under foot every sort of human rank, military, civil, or ecclesiastic ? Was she not the mistress of every situation ? So, instead of attempting to obtain any sort of excuse, the Doge, senate, and nobles of Bobbio sent the next morning to the inn of the “*Sword of Orlando*” to inquire how Signora *Olimpia* had slept the night, to offer her apart-

ments in the palace, and to place at her feet the united homage of the city, together with a small offering of a hundred pounds of wax lights, a hundred pounds of chocolate, a hundred pounds of coffee, a hundred pounds of sugar, fifty pounds of vanilla, fifty of cinnamon, nutmeg, and other spices, twenty-five hams and fifty Bologna sausages, twenty baskets of pears, peaches, nectarines, and almonds, and a hundred yards of rose-coloured silk ; as it was the habit of the republic to send to princes and great potentates passing through its dominions.

Signora Olimpia answered that she had slept eight hours and a half ; declined to leave her quarters at the "Sword of Orlando ;" accepted for herself the wax lights, chocolate, vanilla, and coffee ; distributed the hams and sausages to the crowd of beggars before her windows ;

made a present of the silk to her maid, and the fruit and sugar to her monkey, her parrot, and her dog; and declined to take any further notice of the senate and people of Bobbio. During the following days there came more compliments and presents; sonnets from all the priestlets in Bobbio; snuff-boxes, watches, fans, necklaces from all the gentlemen; flowers and ribbons from all the ladies; of none of which she condescended to take the slightest notice. The only two gifts which she glanced at were a little bunch of coarse roses, sent by a poor little deformed cobbler, which she put in water, and a tiny pair of satin slippers, with Cupids holding lyres and music-books exquisitely embroidered upon them. She turned them round, and asked disdainfully—

“Who sent these?”

Colombina, the maid, answered timidly (well accustomed to her lady's scornful ways)—

"They are from the Generalissimo Count Brighella, one of the oldest and noblest of the senators, and worked entirely with his own fingers."

Signora Olimpia slightly raised one of her straight, black eyebrows and answered—

"I don't like generals who embroider slippers. Tell him he may wear them himself for my sake."

Colombina was silent, but felt mortified. She did not care about old Generalissimo Brighella, but she thought his messenger, Arlecchino, a well-bred and discreet youth, and was sorry to have to give him such a message; the more so as the lithe, dark creature had promised to take her all over the town and show her the

sights. So when Arlecchino returned, arrayed in a striped jerkin and hose of the Brighella colours, a large felt hat cocked on one side, she said nothing about the slippers, but simply accepted his escort for a walk, during which he showed her all the principal monuments, and introduced her to the waiting-maids of various noble ladies, whom it puzzled her very much that her mistress should decline to know.

The next morning, as she was curling and powdering the beautiful black locks of the great singer, Colombina chattered away about her walk. She was much fascinated by the idea of her admirer being a real bravo. She had been admired by scores of lacqueys, head cooks, coachmen, valets, pages, and even pet dwarfs ; but the respectful adoration of a bravo, who had stabbed people and thrown them into wells,

had a new charm for her romantic mind. After chattering on about the churches, the palaces, the equipages, the noble families, and the bits of scandal with which Arlecchino had regaled her, she remembered a fact which she gabbled out rapidly and heedlessly, while she twisted her mistress' curls round her fingers.

"And the Signora must know that one peculiarity of this country is that no one is permitted to ask, and it is death to any senator to reveal—would the Signora turn her head a little to the left?—to reveal the—what is it called? Ah, to reveal the revenue of the state—that was what Arlecchino called it."

"Indeed," answered Signora Olimpia, coolly, "is it so?" adding to herself, "They shall reveal it to Olimpia Fantastici, or I will enter a convent and never sing a note again!"



CHAPTER VII.

PANTALONE BUSDRAGO had eaten the twenty-fifth of his hundred soups. Strange to say, he could not get himself to relish the ducal food, nor did he even grow at all accustomed to its peculiarities. It seemed, on the contrary, that the mysterious flavour became more and more marked, and more unendurable, the greater the number of soups he consumed. Whether the fault was in him or in the soup, he could not discover. He longed to make some else

taste it ; but who might taste it save the Prince of the Hundred Soups ? After all, Pantalone Busdrago was of a sound constitution of body, and three months' bad food would not kill him ; besides, it was worthy of a magnanimous man to tolerate evil when allied to honour. So he tasted his twenty-sixth soup, hoping to find it rather better ; but, alas ! it was more disgusting than before, and after two or three vain attempts to finish it, he had to leave it. The worst of it was that, little as he had gradually become aware, the same flavour pervaded every other dish sent up by the ducal cook ; less strong, indeed, but still perceptible, and as time went on not only perceptible but intolerable. At first he left the soup unfinished, and made his meal off the other dishes ; but after a time he found it

impossible to eat even of them. What must people think? Had he been alone he would have emptied the dishes out of the window, and sent them down clean; but in the presence of the solemn servants of the commonwealth he could only say that the hot weather took away his appetite, and look very happy while vainly trying to satisfy his hunger on the fruit and dessert. However, this system could not last long. Pantalone Busdrago was beginning to starve. He would have paid millions for a slice of boiled beef, such as was consumed by his scullions; he looked with envy at the pastry-cooks, carrying their neat white baskets of hot cakes across the square. But after all, was not the hundred soups a mere form? Could not a Doge live upon more human food? As long as none of the senate knew it, there could be no

harm in getting eatables from without. So one morning he called one of the pages, and gave him a little note to carry to Palazzo Busdrago. The page demurred; it was strictly illegal to carry messages from the Doge to the other world.

"Messages, yes!" answered Pantalone, putting a piece of gold in the page's hand! "but this is not a message. It is a request to my daughter."

"Impossible," answered the page.

Pantalone Busdrago put another gold coin in the lad's hand.

"Listen. I have a delicate stomach, and require a special diet. The soup they make here is not very digestible. Thou must have heard that before, eh?" And Pantalone tried to look very roguish.

The boy stared. No; he had never heard that the soup was indigestible.

"Be that as it may," answered the Doge, "*I* cannot digest it; my stomach is morbidly sensitive." And he tried to assume a melancholy and dyspeptic air, much out of keeping with his fat and rosy face. "I must, therefore, have some of my usual food sent here by my daughter. If thou wilt contrive to bring it me every day, thou shalt have a gold piece in every empty plate."

The page opened his eyes, and, after a moment's hesitation, consented to undertake the matter. Every day, therefore, a mysterious box was smuggled into the Doge's room, and smuggled out again in the evening, being hidden during the interval under a loose slab of marble. By means of this ingenious arrangement, Pan-

talone Busdrago recovered his spirits, and became wholly indifferent to the quality of the ducal soups, which became daily more execrable. How much wiser, he thought, than to make a fuss about it, which would only suggest that I was not made to be a Doge.

It was soon after this happy arrangement that a new and terrible trial fell upon the Doge. A spark of destruction had been brought into the commonwealth, and Pantalone's secret enemies were blowing upon it day and night, in hopes of its becoming a conflagration.

The great opera-house had been newly fitted up, the parts had been learned, the piece rehearsed, play-bills had been sent to all the neighbouring cities, and the inns of Bobbio were arranging accommodation for innumerable

visitors from other states, who were expected for the grand musical performance, to obtain which the citizens had taxed themselves for five long years. But the heroine of all these preparations gave no signs of life. So the Signory determined to inquire when Signora Olimpia Fantastici would condescend to sing, and politely invited her to come and talk the matter over with the Doge and the senate on Tuesday the 30th June, 1695, at half-past six in the evening. A letter to this effect, magnificently embossed and scented, was accordingly dispatched to the lady. No answer was received, but on Tuesday, June 30th, at half-past six in the evening the Doge and senate of Bobbio were assembled in the Hall of Hercules in the palace. Pantalone Busdrago, in his rose-coloured silk robe and flowing white peruke,

sat at the head of the table, the senators in black all around. By his side was a vacant seat for Signora Olimpia. The secretaries of the senate sat at another table, ready to draw out a grand play-bill in Latin. Half-past six struck; the door opened, and the ushers admitted—not Signora Olimpia, but one of the waiters of the hostelry of the “Sword of Orlando.” He advanced in great trepidation, went down on one knee, and handed the Doge a small box; after which he retired. The Magnificent Pantalone placed the box on the table, unlocked it, and drew from it another box, a musical snuffbox, on whose lid was a miniature portrait of the siren. To the snuffbox was attached a slip of paper, on which was written—

“To the Doge, Senate, and people of Bobbio,

Olimpia Fantastici sends greeting and this box, which shows her features to the life, and performs to perfection all her favourite airs, with her own extemporary variations."

The senators looked round at each other in mute dismay. Pantalone Busdrago remained standing, his two hands resting on the table, biting his lips with a look of vacant horror, then, in order to say something, and something which could in no way compromise him, he remarked with deep significance—

"I will say nothing, Most Ample Senators ; this incident requires no comment." And he sat down considerably relieved by this speech.

The Most Ample Senators exchanged whispers; then there were confused cries—"The honour of the commonwealth is at stake!" "The commonwealth has been insulted!"

The Senator Scaramuccia rose, and striking his breast with one hand, cried—

“This affront cries for vengeance!” And he remained standing, glaring wildly at Pantalone Busdrago.

The Senator Scaramuccia, descended from Julius Cæsar, was a very authoritative person; he had a louder voice, a redder face, blacker eyebrows, and a greater habit of browbeating than any one else in the whole state; he was, moreover, the mortal enemy of Pantalone, ever since the latter had refused him the hand of his daughter.

“It cries for vengeance!” repeated Scaramuccia. And, unhooking an immense, rusty sword from a trophy on the wall, he cast it violently on the green cloth of the table. The senators jumped on their seats at the sudden

rattle of steel, and, fired by Scaramuccia's example, they mostly rose and shouted, "Vengeance!"

Pantalone Busdrago, dismayed by this war-like demonstration, rose and said confusedly—

"By all means. I—I quite agree—I quite agree. Yes, by all means."

"In that case," answered Scaramuccia, in his loud, swaggering voice, "it is for the Doge to obtain it for us. From the Doge do the senate and people of Bobbio require that satisfaction be given for this affront."

"The Doge! the Doge!" cried the senators, delighted to shift the matter on to other shoulders, and to be excused from seeking for vengeance themselves. "The Doge is responsible!"

Pantalone Busdrago nearly fainted at this

announcement ; but recovering his presence of mind, and determined to play his part, he merely rang the bell by his side, and called for the captain of the guard.

The Swiss, all striped and parti-coloured, entered.

“ In the name of the commonwealth,” ordered the Doge, solemnly, his small person growing with his sense of dignity ; “ in the name of the commonwealth, I order you to arrest the woman, Olimpia Fantastici, as guilty of insult to the senate and people of Bobbio.”

The Swiss saluted and retired. There was a hum of approbation, a few cries of “ Long live Pantalone Busdrago ! Long live the honour of the state ! ”

Pantalone felt quite martial and radiant with this exercise of his supreme authority. He

seated himself at the head of the table, and awaited the execution of his orders.

The senators had dispersed in groups about the room. Suddenly the door of the Hall of Hercules opened, and there entered precipitately the Generalissimo Brighella, who had not been present at this scene. The tall, scraggy man was evidently much excited. He advanced to the table, and said hurriedly in his ever rapid voice—

“I entreat the Magnificent Pantalone Busdrago, and all these Most Ample Senators, to listen to me. A fatal error has been committed”—and he fixed his eyes on the Doge—“not effaceable, but still reparable. I find to my surprise that the soldiers are proceeding, in the midst of an immense crowd, through the streets, and for what? For what, O Most

Ample Senators? To arrest a woman, a stage woman, a crazy creature, whose impertinent vagaries are the laughing-stock of all Europe. And it is on such a being that the commonwealth of Bobbio is to vent its wrath. Oh, let such a thing never be said; let not posterity smile at the war waged by the Doge of Bobbio upon Signora Olimpia Fantastici."

This speech, delivered rapidly, with just the right amount of warmth and the right amount of scorn, had a perfect effect; it shamed every one by its perfect moderation.

The senators laughed at the thought; but the Doge did not laugh; the responsibility of the ridiculous deed was upon him alone. He rang his bell.

"Dispatch some one after the soldiers sent to arrest Olimpia Fantastici!" he cried. "Tell

them not to execute my orders! Run, quick! stop them!"

The guards and pages smiled at each other, the senators bit their lips.

"A little moderation, Magnificent Pantalone Busdrago," entreated Brighella; "do not compromise your dignity in this way, for the sake of the position you hold. What will people say——"

"Let them say what they like!" cried Pantalone, losing all control. "Confound you, why must you first ask for vengeance and then say you don't want it?"

"Magnificent Pantalone Busdrago," solemnly remonstrated the eldest of the senators, "weigh your words. Remember the august assembly before whom you are speaking."

Pantalone Busdrago was silent. What a

double and triple fool he had made of himself! He wished that the earth might open and swallow him up.

"The Magnificent Pantalone Busdrago did not intend any disrespect to this Most Ample Assembly," remarked Brighella, in sweet, low tones, casting his eyes round the room as much as to say, "What can you expect from a man whose grandfather made sausages? How can he show wisdom or dignity?"

The senators looked very black indeed.

"As to this woman, this Olimpia," proceeded Brighella, "that is of little consequence. What ought to be lamented is the undignified part which the executive has played in the eyes of the people; first, by giving an indecorous order, then by revoking it too hastily. Not but that the matter of the musical snuffbox——"

"Yes, yes," answered the senators, "all unites to make us ridiculous. First the snuffbox business, then the orders and counter orders.

"And the monkey whom we escorted in triumph," added Scaramuccia, with a loud, angry laugh.

"Altogether," said the senators, "everything seems to be going wrong." And each added an unspoken but fervent wish that the fiend might deliver them from Pantalone Busdrago.

When the assembly had broken up, the Generalissimo Brighella met the Senator Scaramuccia in the square before the palace.

"Well," asked the swaggerer, "are you satisfied, O wise Brighella? As to myself, it appears to me that I never saw a greater bungle than to-day's proceedings."

"Impatient Scaramuccia!" answered the

Generalissimo with a smile of triumph, "all is going splendidly! Bungles are what we want! Did I not tell you that Signora Olimpia was going to insult us? Was I not right in saying that Pantalone, little fat fool, could be precipitated into some absurd act? Ah, my Arlecchino keeps me well informed through the siren's waiting-maid."

"Indeed," snorted Scaramuccia; "and yet I think you have made me play an absurd part."

"Whatever the part, you have played it divinely well," cried Brighella. "If I had a daughter, Scaramuccia, she should be thine to-morrow."

"Many thanks," answered the bully, "I should'nt fancy a daughter of yours, ingenious Brighella!"

“The brute!” murmured the Generalissimo to himself; “if it were not for my hatred of Pantalone—— But vengeance on him first!”





CHAPTER VIII.

THE news of all that had passed in that council of the thirtieth June spread like wildfire throughout the city of Bobbio. The general opinion of the inhabitants was that it was all the fault of Pantalone Busdrago; *it* including all the incidents which had accompanied and followed the arrival of Signora Olimpia Fantastici. The universal feeling was one of extreme impatience and irritation, not against Olimpia, but against

the Doge. "If only we had the right sort of Doge, she would have sung a week ago," was the verdict of the street politicians ; and meanwhile there she was at the "Sword of Orlando," refusing to sing a note, while spending that precious money raised by the five years' snuff tax. The heads of the guilds went with banners and maces to petition the Signory to take measures to make Signora Olimpia sing. The Signory promised to do its best.

So, after deliberation, two senators were dispatched to the hostelry of the "Sword of Orlando" to remonstrate with the lady. But instead of the lady, they obtained an audience only from the maid, and returned disconsolate. The next day a deputation of six senators was dispatched, with no better success ; after that twelve were sent, in senatorial robes. Then

only did Signora Olimpia deign to give an answer, to the effect that she would speak only with the Doge, with the Doge alone and unaccompanied.

The deputation returned home in consternation, and a solemn council was held over the matter that night. For five hundred years the Doge of Bobbio had left the palace only to visit kings, emperors, or popes ; for a thousand years the Doge of Bobbio had never been out of the palace unaccompanied. And now, the Doge of Bobbio was called upon to visit a singing-woman, and visit her alone ! They shuddered at such a thought. No, the answer must be that the Doge would *not* go.

At the moment that this decision had been come to, there was a confused noise in the square below.

"The people have assembled!" cried the captain of the guard, coming into the council hall.

"Let them assemble!" answered Scaramuccia grandly.

The noise of voices, broken by cries of "the Doge! the Doge!" became louder and louder.

Presently the captain of the guard again came in.

"The people insist upon knowing the answer," he cried; "the guilds are trying to force their way into the palace. Are we to shut the gates and drive them back with our halberds? There is not an instant to be lost."

The senators looked at each other in dismay.

"Speak to them from the balcony!" cried a voice, the voice of Brighella. The windows were thrown open, and the Doge and senators

stepped on to the immense balcony. Below, in the square, seethed an impatient multitude ; the banners of the guilds appeared here and there, mingled with the flags of the different quarters of the city, with their armorial bearings of elephants and castles, goats, griffons, and unicorns. On the appearance of the Signory there was a universal silence, broken after a moment by loud cheering cries. "The Olimpia's answer! We want her answer."

The Generalissimo Brighella pushed forward to the parapet and said in a clear, loud voice—

"People of Bobbio, the answer of Signora Olimpia Fantastici is that she will speak only to the Doge himself, alone, and at her lodgings. You know whether such a request can be granted."

There was a confused murmur of indecision ;

then, as with one voice, came the answer, "Let the Doge go to her!"

The attitude of the citizens of Bobbio had been so threatening throughout, and the responsibility of refusing their request was so grave, that not one of the senators dared make any resistance. The Doge must go, and the sooner this degrading visit were got over, the better.

Pantalone Busdrago did not share the dismal feelings of the senate; he was an upstart, a hopeless plebeian, and to go and visit a singer at an inn did not appear such a hideous enormity as to the men whose ancestors had been Doges during a thousand years. Indeed this event rather cheered up the Prince of the Hundred Soups; he saw in this delicate commission, upon whose success so much depended,

an opportunity for displaying his tact and sagacity, and regaining the sympathy of the people; besides, the mere fact of being permitted to go out alone once more was enough to cheer him. So the Magnificent Pantalone Busdrago was arrayed in the crimson velvet walking-dress, with the little crimson velvet cloak and the plumed hat, worn by the Doge when paying state visits; and he was solemnly conducted to the splendid yellow emblazoned coach, drawn by six Flemish dapples.

Once alone in the immense vehicle, Pantalone Busdrago began to muse over the errand on which he was bound, and the manner in which it had best be accomplished. That it would succeed he did not doubt for a second; he was a plebeian indeed, and sometimes unable to restrain his feelings within patrician bounds, but



Pantalone gave himself full credit for tact and dexterity; he felt particularly supple and insinuating; he felt that he could succeed where the solemn nobles, with their stiff and scornful manner, must fail. "I will bring her round to reason," he said to himself, as he alighted at the hostelry of the "Sword of Orlando," amid a crowd of astonished and awe-stricken servants. Two pages, in the colours of the commonwealth, preceded him up the stairs, and three lacqueys followed him. The landlord of the "Sword of Orlando," hat in hand, threw open the folding doors of Signora Olimpia's apartment, and announced in a loud voice, "His Serene Magnificence Pantalone Busdrago, Doge of Bobbio."

Pantalone stepped into the room. Scarcely had he done so when a little cur rushed at

his legs, barking furiously, a large green parrot flew up against his head, beating its wings and shrieking ; while a strange, long, lithe monkey, habited in scarlet, began to dance and jabber round him with wild gestures. Pantalone Busdrago almost lost his senses, he beat about him with his plumed purple hat and his gold-headed cain, vainly trying to defend himself.

“Be quiet, every one of you !” cried a clear, firm voice.

The animals retreated, and a tall, beautiful young woman, dressed in an oriental gown, advanced towards the Doge, a small whip in one hand.

“Magnificent Pantalone Busdrago,” said Signora Olimpia Fantastici, “you are welcome !”

Pantalone, half bewildered, half enraged, let

himself be led up to the large horsehair sofa, where the lady made room for him by the side of a superb white cat. He recollected the importance of the mission and the strange character of his hostess, so he smothered his anger (which was never a difficult matter for the good-natured little creature), set his peruke straight, pulled his cravat, which had been seized by the monkey, into its right place, and remarked blandly, "You are well guarded, Signora Olimpia—guarded like the Fairy Morgana. By the way," he added, hitting on a bright idea, "are these, perhaps, admirers of yours, whom you have metamorphosed into beasts."

Signora Olimpia frowned. "I have never seen people turn into anything save asses," she replied.

Pantalone felt taken aback. Was this a covert allusion to the Senate of Bobbio? At all events he pretended not to understand, and merely laughed foolishly. He looked round the room, at the tables and chairs, the nicknacks scattered about, hoping to find in them some topic of conversation. His eyes lighted on the spinet, on which lay an open music book. He rose, walked up to the instrument, turned over the notes, as if they conveyed some meaning to him, which they did not in the faintest degree, and remarked in a light tone—

“When shall we and the people of Bobbio at length have the inestimable pleasure of hearing you, most admirable lady?”

“That is more than I can tell you, Magnificent Pantalone Busdrago,” answered Signora Olimpia quietly, pulling the ears of the cat.

"Why so?" asked the Doge, turning round with a look of great concern; "have you a cold? If so, allow me to recommend you these lozenges." And he drew from his pocket a wonderfully embossed little box, set with brilliants, which he had the forethought to bring with him as a peace-offering.

"Are they really good?" asked Signora Olimpia, drily.

"They are perfectly sovereign." And Pantalone stretched out the box gallantly.

"In that case I will accept them," said the singer; and, opening a drawer, she displayed to the astonished eyes of the Doge a perfect regiment of boxes of all sizes, inlaid with precious enamel and jewels, and the meanest of which far surpassed his. From among these she chose a little china box, opened it, put into it two or

three of the Doge's lozenges, and restored the remainder to him, considerably crestfallen at this treatment of his intended present.

"Thank you very much," she said, "I will try some of your lozenges when next I have a cold."

"Then you have no cold now?" cried Pantalone in amazement.

"No cold—not to my knowledge, at least." And, in order to elucidate the question, Signora Olimpia pitched her voice on the note *do la sol re* on the fifth line of the treble, ran up and down two octaves on both sides in semitones (so at least Pantalone affirmed), swelled the uppermost note, shook on it until the whole house rang with the superb sound and the street re-echoed, and then remarked—

"No, I don't think I have a cold."

"But, Holy Madonna," exclaimed the Doge,

perfectly beyond himself; "why on earth won't you sing then?"

"Because, I suppose, I don't feel inclined to do so at present."

The Magnificent Pantalone Busdrago thought it high time to change his tone. "My dear young lady, he remarked with dignity, "permit me to remark that you are no longer entirely your own mistress, that in accepting the offer of the Senate of Bobbio—— In short, to be plain, that I have the honour, as Doge of Bobbio, to intimate to you my supreme order that you——"

"That I do what?" asked Signora Olimpia coolly, eyeing with contempt the little man perched on a high chair, and straightening his person solemnly against its back, while nodding gravely at her.

"That I do what?" she repeated.

"That you sing when and where the senate may choose."

"Indeed!" laughed Signora Olimpia. "But suppose I do myself the honour of disobeying your supreme command?"

Pantalone rose, crimson with anger. "Signora," he said, "I know best how to enforce my orders."

"I don't doubt it for a moment," replied she, quickly, "and that is the very reason why I ask how you would proceed with that object in view." And she fixed her dark eyes upon him, her beautiful upper lip curling with contempt.

The Magnificent Pantalone Busdrago was not to be silenced by such insolence.

"Signora Olimpia Fantastici," he said gravely, "the laws of Bobbio are stringent. I know that ladies, and ladies of your profession, must be

respected and even occasionally humoured ; but I may inform you that one stroke of my pen on this"—and he drew a printed order from his pocket-book—"will compel you to exchange your present abode for the state prison of the republic."

"I dare say it will. But that will not make me sing. I shall remain in the prison until—until the period when my engagement with Bobbio expires and my engagement with the Emperor Leopold begins ; and I suppose you will not compel the Emperor to come and fetch me here?" She smiled at the change in Pantalone's face at the mention of the Emperor. Heavens and earth ! he might be bringing on some political complication.

"In short, my Lord Doge of Bobbio," added the lady rising, "you must know that as my

voice is in my throat, it is useless to try and get at it without my consent. Of course you may starve me, torture me. I dare say you may make me scream by some such means. But you cannot make me *sing*."

Pantalone Busdrago was perfectly dumbfounded by this imperturbable contempt.

"Don't be angry, my dear Signora Olimpia," he entreated, "all I said was mere jest—the purest jest."

"Of course. What else could it be?" she answered, disdainfully.

"To return to the matter," proceeded Pantalone, rapidly, "you perceive that time is going on, the people are growing discontented, and the senate of Bobbio desires to know when you will sing. If the present terms do not suit you, do not hesitate to mention any others, as

the Signory will not hesitate to grant them you."

To this munificent offer the lady did not immediately answer. She mused for a moment, then said : " Very good ; I will sing to-night."

" To-night ! Ah, thank goodness !" cried Pantalone.

" On condition of your satisfying me on one point."

" Speak, Signora Olimpia !"

" Very well, then, Magnificent Pantalone Busdrago ; I will sing to-night if you (you, not the senate) will tell me now, this moment, the exact sum of the revenue of the Serene Commonwealth of Bobbio."

The words cut like a sword into Pantalone's soul. He turned red and white ; he felt as if he were committing some horrid crime.

"Not a word more!" he cried, trembling from head to foot. To reveal the revenue of the commonwealth was death, and to be questioned on the subject, to be tempted to commit the offence, was almost a crime in itself.

"Not a word more?" repeated Signora Olimpia; "in that case, not a note more. Magnificent Pantalone Busdrago, you can tell the Signory, from your own knowledge, that I have not got the least cold." And she rose disdainfully.

Pantalone rose in great agitation. "Farewell, Signora Olimpia," he said, and hurried out of the room with a precipitation which alarmed the pages and lacqueys who were awaiting him outside.

Pantalone Busdrago sank among the cushions of the coach in an agony of fear. Of the ill-

success of his mission he did not think ; he thought only of the horrible danger to which the terrible woman had exposed him. It seemed to him as if Signora Olimpia had unbolted a trapdoor from which he had retreated this once, but on to which he might, at any moment, be made to tread. If the senate, his enemies, Brighella, were to know what she had asked him, how could he prove that he had not satisfied her curiosity ? The invitation to commit crime would be crime enough in their eyes. No, no one must ever know what Olimpia Fantastici had asked.

Pantalone Busdrago, frightened at the thought of the crime he had not committed, appeared before the Signory with the feelings and much of the aspect of a criminal. His answers were vague, his account of his visit hesitating and

confused ; all that could clearly be got out of him was that Signora Olimpia Fantastici declined to sing for the present. He seemed nervously desirous to get off the subject.

“What on earth can she have done to poor Pantalone?” asked the more light-hearted of the senators.

The graver shook their heads and said, “There is something wrong.”

“Neither the behaviour of Signora Olimpia Fantastici, however improper it may have been, nor anything that could have happened at her house, is sufficient to explain such strange confusion in the Doge of Bobbio,” said the Generalissimo Brighella, mysteriously.

What did Brighella mean? No one had the faintest notion, and every one was, therefore, the more deeply impressed with the importance of his words.



CHAPTER IX.

THE Magnificent Pantalone Busdrago was feeling very wretched indeed. He had failed in his mission to Signora Olimpia Fantastici, his reign was marked by insult to the senate, by indecorous behaviour of the executive, by degradation of the ducal dignity, by popular discontent and agitation ; the reign of the upstart would be of ill omen in the annals of Bobbio. All this weighed upon Pantalone's mind, and when to it was added

the recollection of the question of Signora Olimpia, he felt as if a great sin were upon him. At this moment Evil Fortune, or, the malice of his enemies, sent a calamity which precipitated the inevitable catastrophe.

The sly and supple Arlecchino, last of Bobbian bravos, had discovered the secret intercourse between the ducal palace and the Busdrago house. He had tracked the Lady Giacinta Busdrago to the church of St. Crispinianus, whither she went every morning to her devotions, accompanied by her maid. He had seen the lady, veiled in black, repair to a certain confessional in a dark part of the church, and remain for some moments kneeling at its grating ; after a moment she would look round, beckon to her maid to approach, and then, after some movements, which the bravo could not at

first comprehend, depart with her attendant. The faithful Arlecchino could not for a long while discover the clue to this extreme devotion ; but one day as he sat, pretending to be listening to a sermon, he saw a Capuchin friar issue out of the confessional, carrying something under his brown cape. Arlecchino let him pass along the nave, and out of the church door, then followed with the rapidity of lightning ; there, before him, walked the Capuchin, his mysterious parcel under his cape. The bravo followed him at a certain distance. The Capuchin took several by-streets, and looked round ; Arlecchino immediately pretended to be going in the opposite direction, and the monk pursued his way. He turned a sharp corner and entered a little square, formed by the crossing of two blind alleys ; on one side was the back of a church, on the other

that of a palace ; in the middle, recording a murder which had been committed there a couple of centuries before, was a column surmounted by a statue of the Virgin.

Arlecchino peeped cautiously round the corner ; on the steps of the column was seated a boy wrapped in a dark cloak, and to him the Capuchin was handing his mysterious load. Arlecchino had seen enough ; the Capuchin was the confessor of the Lady Giacinta Busdrago, the boy was one of the pages of the ducal palace, the mysterious object was a metal box. Arlecchino flew home to his master ; in a moment the Generalissimo Brighella had comprehended the whole plot.

“ That is why the dog has been able to endure his soup so long ! ” he exclaimed inwardly ;
“ but he shall baffle me no longer ! ”

Brighella dressed himself in his black senatorial robe, pulled his silk cap over his ears, and hastened to the palace. He mounted the staircase leading to the Doge's apartments; but where to await his opportunity? The Swiss guards and pages would no more permit his access than that of any other senator. On the landing was a tall window concealed by a heavy curtain; he hid behind the curtain. He remained for about half an hour in this concealment, in great fear of some one discovering him. He heard steps, and peeped from behind the curtain; it was only a lacquey carrying a broom in his hand, and who proceeded to sweep the stairs. If it should enter his mind to sweep behind the curtain? The Generalissimo's heart beat loud. At length the man took his broom and dustpan and departed. Brighella breathed

freely. Presently a bell rang ; there was a noise of steps and a clank of weapons ; the Swiss were going to breakfast and putting their halberds in the rack of the guard-room. They came out noisily. Between their departure and the arrival of those who were to relieve guard there was a gap, an inexcusable lapse of time. "This is the moment !" Brighella said to himself. It *was* the moment. Pit-a-pat came rapid little steps across the marble floor. The Generalissimo looked and raised a corner of the curtain. It was the boy, the page, and beneath his cloak he carried something, the something given him by the Lady Giacinta's confessor. He was hurrying across the corridor, looking about him, when suddenly the curtain was pulled aside, and out rushed, with the impetuosity of a tiger, the Generalissimo Brighella.

He pounced upon the boy, who shrieked out, dropped the box, and fled up a secret staircase. The whole action passed in the twinkling of an eye, and, with the exception of the shriek, in perfect silence. The Generalissimo rapidly opened the tin box ; he could scarcely repress a diabolical smile at its contents ; close packed together were a pile of sandwiches. He hesitated for a moment. Would he render his enemy ridiculous for ever, or would he—— Should it be comedy or tragedy ? Brighella's ferocious hatred chose the tragedy. He pulled open the window. Beneath it was a deep well ; he shook out the contents of the box ; sandwich after sandwich plumped into the well. Then he took the box, now empty, and rushed to the headquarters of the Swiss guard. " Place the page Pasquariello under arrest ! There is

treason ! double the guards at the Doge's door," he cried. The Machiavellian plotter knew full well that the culpable page was not Pasquariello, but Trivelino ; but his object was that an innocent and unconscious person being caught, would deny the whole matter, and thus awaken greater suspicion, whereas the real culprit might immediately confess the truth, and thus prevent the matter from assuming greater importance.

After this the Generalissimo went privately to the principal members of the senate. To them he displayed the empty box. What might have been its contents ? He did not know. The page, he said, had tossed the contents into a well beneath the window, before he, the Generalissimo, had been able to interpose. He would not venture a conjecture as to the possible nature of the lost contents ; he would

only remind the senators, his colleagues, that any communication between the Doge and the outer world was a grave offence, and remark that tin boxes were generally used for the keeping of papers. Meanwhile, he advised that no scandal should be made, that Pantalone Busdrago be well guarded, that close watch be kept on his movements, and that information be collected. "For," said the Generalissimo, with his usual prudence, "we cannot yet affirm either that there was anything treasonable in the box, nor even that the box was for the Doge ; and in this case we had better let the matter rest, rather than brand the commonwealth in the person of its representative."

Every one agreed to this wise and moderate policy, and no allusion was made to the incident ; while the Generalissimo was universally

praised for his sagacity and patriotism, and for his moderation towards his enemies.

“By acting thus,” mused Brighella, “I give myself time to develop the matter (as yet far too small) or to let it develop itself. The wise statesman does not try and bring about this or that definite catastrophe, he merely opens the door for any catastrophe that may be waiting outside. He sows, and waits to see what may sprout up. In my opinion,” concluded Brighella to himself, “there is little to admire in murdering one’s enemies ; any coarse ruffian can do that ; the delicate and artistic proceeding is to force them, by the weight of circumstances, to commit suicide. But this can be achieved only by genius.”



CHAPTER X.

PANTALONE BUSDRAGO waited and waited for the arrival of the trusty page carrying the welcome tin box ; but the hours passed, and there appeared no sign of either. The heart of the Prince of the Hundred Soups sank within him, and his doubts, his vague fears, were strengthened by the exhaustion of hunger. The evening came, and with it supper time. The butler of the commonwealth, the arms of Bobbio embroidered on his

crimson livery, came in as usual to inform the Doge that supper was awaiting His Magnificence. At this announcement Pantalone's spirits revived; it seemed as if even the ducal fare must taste like ambrosia to the starving man. The solemn emblazoned lacqueys brought the dishes on to the table; they placed before the Doge the seventeenth of his hundred soups. Pantalone Busdrago put a spoonful of it into his mouth; but alas! it was as much as he could do to swallow the villainous stuff; he gasped. It could not be an hallucination that that ineffably abominable flavour had grown ten times worse since he had last tasted the soup; for as long as the mysterious tin box had reached him, he had merely fiddle-faddled with his soup, and made his meal off bread and dessert. He tried again, but could take only the faintest sip out of his

spoon. He waved his hand ; the lacqueys removed the soup, accustomed by this time to His Magnificence's strange want of appetite. Another dish was brought ; it was a *ragout*. Pantalone, sinking with hunger, attacked it with desperation. In vain ! The excruciating, undefinable taste permeated the *ragout*. He tried another dish, and another ; there again was that most hideous taste, tenfold what it had originally been. Pantalone groaned. He asked for more bread, more almonds, more preserved cherries, more peaches. He tried to make his meal off them. But what is bread, what are almonds, preserved cherries, and peaches to a man of voracious nature, and ravenously hungry ? He went to bed starving, and lay awake for a long while.

Evidently something had gone wrong, either

with Giacinta or with the page ; how could he find out ? He thought for a moment of complaining at last of the infamous ducal food ; but to do so now would be to awaken suspicion. How explain his not having complained before ? Would not this facilitate the discovery of the treasonable introduction into the palace of the tin box ? No ; he must suffer in silence.

The next morning he did not see *the* page among the pages.

“Where is Trivelino ?” he asked with feigned indifference.

“Trivelino,” answered the head lacquey, “had been missing since the previous morning ; there was a panic among the pages because the page Pasquariello had been locked up by order of the Major-domo.

No tin box again ! And this mysterious dis-

appearance of Trivelino, this mysterious incarceration of Pasquariello, what could they mean? Evil, most certainly. Yet how came it that Pasquariello, who knew nothing about the tin box, should be the victim? Perhaps neither his incarceration nor the disappearance of Trivelino had any real connection with the matter; perhaps the tin box had failed to appear on account of Trivelino's disappearance, instead of that being caused by the tin box. Thus Pantalone Busdrago went on pondering all day, pondering and starving. Somehow it struck him that there were more Swiss than usual in the guard-room, that there were more lacqueys in the ante-chamber; it seemed to him as if he were being watched. Was it fancy? or did they really follow his movements? No senators came, and no letters were brought. What

could be the meaning of this cessation of state-business? He grew anxious. Again at dinner and supper he tried to taste his food, but again he had to send it down untouched; the inexpressible taste was stronger than the previous day. He ate bread, almonds, preserved plums, and quince marmalade; the hunger raged wilder within him. He tried to sleep; in vain. He sent for the head valet and requested that a book—any book—might be sent him from the ducal library. The answer was that no book or any other objects could be sent to him.

The next morning Pantalone Busdrago arose with a great sense of weakness. He looked at himself in the mirror. He seemed strangely altered; he scarcely recognized that long, hollow, sallow face as his own. He tried to look himself. He rubbed his cheeks, they were yellow

as wax ; he put out his tongue, it was white as ashes ; he made faces at himself, and felt frightened at his own eyes.

He heard the bell ringing for council, and called for his robes and cap. The valet answered laconically that the senate was going to assemble, as it had assembled the previous day, without the Doge. Pantalone stared in amazement. Was he, or was he not Doge ? What could be the meaning of this ? He expressed a desire to drive out in the coach, or walk in the gardens ; he begged that the Senator Major-domo might come to him for that purpose. The answer of the Senator Major-domo was that he could not come, and that His Magnificence must stay in his apartments till further notice. Pantalone Busdrago was a prisoner ! He now understood it. He had been degraded

from his ducal functions ; he was being guarded in his rooms ! What had he done ? The sandwiches ! It could not be the sandwiches ! To eat sandwiches, even if smuggled in, was not a state crime. He sat down in an armchair in deep despondency. Alas ! this was the end of his ambitious dreams. A miserable reign, marked by every sort of public disaster and private misery, and ending with starvation, imprisonment, and who knows what else ?

The next day, and the day after that, things continued as before. The senate met without the Doge. Not a senator came near him. No letters, no drive, no walk, no book, and the uneatable, unutterably horrible food. A strange idea entered Pantalone's mind. All his misfortunes were connected with his being Doge. Before becoming Doge he had been successful

in every undertaking, esteemed and honoured by every one, constantly well and cheerful. There must be some great sin in his being Doge in such an unprecedented election. As long as he remained Doge he would be miserable ; as soon as he ceased to be Doge all would go right. There was misfortune in the dress, in the rooms, in the food. Oh, what evident mysterious ill-luck there was in those Hundred Soups ! He began revolving all this in his mind ; his brain was heated ; his nerves on the stretch ; he had fever. This notion of the unluckiness of his being Doge grew into a perfect monomania ; he could think of nothing else. He was in a way crazy—a mere shadow, a ghost of himself ; he felt his life sucked in by these horrible ducal walls. He sat hours doing nothing, looking vacantly before him.

Towards the evening of the eighth day of his confinement and of his quasi-starvation, he sank down exhausted on a sofa. In the gloom of the ill-lit room he began to see strange things: heads began to detach themselves from the arabesques of the stamped leather hangings—leering heads which put out their tongues at him; Doges' heads, in cap and beard, frowning upon him. Then they turned into well-known faces—the face of Scaramuccia, of Olimpia Fantastici, of the page Trivelino, of Brighella, sneering and snarling at him. Then he saw, every time he opened his eyes, silver embossed soup tureens, one, two, three, four, five, six, a regiment, a hundred tureens, dim in the air, melting away in accordance with the laws of perspective. He closed his aching eyes and opened them again; there were the hundred

tureens once more. He fell into a lethargy ; he thought he heard chains clanking ; the doors seemed to open, and there appeared a white figure holding in its hand a livid, bloody head ; it was the Doge Vitale Pedrolino II., who had been decapitated in the thirteenth century. The apparition gradually turned into something long and dark, dressed in scarlet ; it was Olimpia Fantastici's monkey, and stretched out its claws to him, leering hideously. Pantalone awoke with a start. It was still night. He shook himself ; he seemed another man. He had come to a tremendous resolution ; he tore off his crimson dress, turned his clothes inside out, blackened his face with the smoke of the candles, tied a kerchief round his shaven head, put his purse in his pocket.

The faint white light of morning was begin-

ning to creep through the shutters. He tore open his bed, pulled forth the sheets, tied them together in hard knots, cautiously opened the window, fastened the end of the rope of sheets to its cresset, and, holding the other end, swung himself out. It was a terrible height from the ground, but the sheets were long enough to enable him to lay hold of the iron bars of the ground-floor window. They were twisted and arched; he scrambled down them on to the ledge, and jumped on to the ground. A man was crossing the street—an officer going to relieve guard. He stared at this apparition, but only for a moment. He seized the fugitive by the arm, and whispered—

“You are safe. I am your friend, the lover of your daughter. I am Leandro Scappini.

Fly, Pantalone Busdrago! To your villa! I will set them on the wrong track."

And Pantalone Busdrago rushed away like a thief.





CHAPTER XI.

GONE? Gone; there could be no doubt about it. They searched beneath every article of furniture, in every closet; there was no sign of Pantalone Busdrago. When the pages and lacqueys had made sure of the matter, they called in the Swiss guard, who, in their turn, made sure that His Magnificence had vanished. News was instantly sent to the Senator Major-domo. The Senator Scaramuccia, descended from Julius Cæsar, flew into a violent passion at this news,

cursed and swore at the attendants, and taking off his horse-wig in an agony of rage, hurled it at the lieutenant of the guard. Then he summoned the Generalissimo Brighella—

“He is gone!” he yelled. “Gone! do you hear that? Flown! nothing but his dress remaining, and a sheet tied to his window.” And Scaramuccia seized the Generalissimo by the shoulder and shook him roughly, as if it were all his fault.

“Be quiet, Scaramuccia,” answered Brighella; “this is the happiest event for our cause. This is a piece of good luck such as I never dared to imagine. Pantalone Busdrago has killed himself! killed himself as assuredly as if he had broken his neck in jumping out of the window. He has put the seal to all the suspicions existing about him.”

And the Generalissimo instantly gave orders that the senate be assembled. The senators hurried to the palace unshaven, with perukes awry, or no perukes at all, in dressing-gown and slippers. Scaramuccia, well prepared by the Generalissimo, broke the great news to them: Pantalone Busdrago had disappeared.

“Disappeared!”

Had been made away with? No, for his watches, his purse, his clothes were gone, and there at the window, tied to the cresset, floated the rope of sheets. Pantalone Busdrago had voluntarily and deliberately absconded.

“Most Ample Senators,” said Brighella, in his calm voice, “do not consider it presumptuous on my part if I say that I always expected some catastrophe would close this ill-omened reign. I voted against the election of Panta-

lone Busdrago, I did all that I legally could to frustrate it ; I bore quietly the reproach of being personally envious ; I let it be said that I—that I, good heavens!—was maliciously envious of such a being as Pantalone Busdrago ! All this I suffered in my desire to open the eyes of this senate to the danger into which it was running. Let me, at least, have the bitter satisfaction of saying, now that my worst presentiments have not only been fulfilled, but far surpassed, that I, and perhaps I alone, voted against the election of Pantalone Busdrago.”

Brighella reseated himself. The other senators looked at each other in blank despair, and consulted in undertones. They now understood it all ; there was the thread of connexion between those mysterious events, the strange behaviour of Pantalone Busdrago on his return

from the inn of the "Sword of Orlando"—behaviour which nothing that could have passed with Olimpia Fantastici could explain—the discovery of the empty tin box which was being carried to the Doge. Pantalone Busdrago's flight explained it all. The lowborn upstart, without veneration or affection for an aristocracy to which his ancestors had never belonged, accustomed only to the base financial speculations of his ancestral shop, had seen in his elevation to the ducal dignity only an opportunity of obtaining money, of selling the commonwealth to its enemies. The senators of Bobbio, overwhelmed by the sense of their blindness in having elected such a monster, sat downcast and helpless. In this great catastrophe, in this mysterious peril for the commonwealth, only one man preserved his cool-

ness, his dignity, his energy. That man was the Generalissimo Brighella. The senate felt it, and unanimously voted—

1st. That Pantalone Busdrago was degraded from the rank of Doge of Bobbio ; and

2nd. That, until further arrangements could be made, Scappino Scappini, Count of Brighella, was raised to the rank of Extraordinary Commissary of the Republic.

These enactments having been registered; and Brighella having taken his place at the head of the table, in the chair formerly occupied by the Doge, the senate sat in council over the matter.

The result of the council was that the guilds and notables were summoned, and the public crier was ordered to declare to the people that Pantalone Busdrago had been degraded from

the ducal rank, declared a traitor and a rebel, and that a price of one thousand sequins was placed upon his head, and two thousand sequins reward offered to any one who should bring him alive to the Signory.

The next thing was to discover what had become of the fugitive. As the Generalissimo Brighella, Extraordinary Commissary of the Republic, and the senate were deliberating on this point, the ushers announced that Leandro Scappini, Colonel of the Light Cavalry of the Republic, desired an audience from the Signory.

The young man was very pale, but he advanced with an unwonted air of decision to the table at which the senators were seated, and said—

“As a reward for any small services I may have rendered my country and the Signory, and

still more so in consideration of the services of my illustrious father, I humbly beg the Signory to elect me as the head of a commission for the discovery of the traitor, Pantalone Busdrago."

Brighella, surprised, cast glances of admiring affection on his son. Thus would he always have had his Leandro. At last his prayers had been heard, and the giddy youth had begun to walk in the footsteps of his parent, and in the road of honour trodden for a thousand years by the family of Brighella. The request was granted, and Leandro Scappini was invested with full powers to proceed to discover and arrest Pantalone Busdrago. "The young bloodhound is on the track of the felon," thought the senate, "and he will be found."

As was evident, Leandro Scappini's first act

was to proceed to the house of Pantalone Busdrago. He rode with an armed force and required admission in the name of the commonwealth.

Leaving a detachment of soldiers at the door, on the stairs, and in the corridors, Leandro Scappini sent word to the Lady Giacinta Busdrago that he must speak to her.

Giacinta Busdrago had heard of her father's disappearance. She stifled her agitation and received the news that the house was filled with soldiers with disdainful anger. She was seated in her boudoir, calm and prepared for battle, beautiful in her quiet intrepidity, when the door opened and there appeared Leandro Scappini, followed by two officers. At the sight of him the Lady Giacinta could not repress a cry of surprise and indignation. "What! he!"

Leandro stepped forward rapidly, and bowing stiffly, said in a cold, hard voice—

“The Lady Giacinta Busdrago must forgive the disturbance which not I but the law of the commonwealth creates. I regret that no more pleasing messenger than the son of Scappio Brighella could be found to break to her the disagreeable news.”

Giacinta stood as if thunderstruck ; then, raising herself to her full height, she answered—

“Speak, Signor Leandro Scappini, and spare your compliments.”

Leandro bade the two officers retire. “I must speak to the Lady Giacinta in private,” he said ; “see that all the doors be guarded.”

They retired. Leandro coolly double-locked the door behind them, closed its massy curtains, and then, approaching the place where Giacinta

Busdrago was seated, her eyes flashing indignation, he cast himself on his knees before her and seized her hand.

"Giacinta," he cried, "listen to me. All this is a mere comedy. I have got myself appointed to seek for your father expressly to prevent others from seeking for him. As long as I am supposed to be on his track no one else will interfere. I can spread false reports; I can enable your father to shift from place to place; I can keep up communications between you and him; I can know when and how he may best escape out of the territories of the republic, should this be necessary. Hitherto I have always acted like a vacillating coward, but now, at least, I can protect your father from mine."

Giacinta pressed his hand, unable to say a

word ; Leandro kissed it fervently ; he felt almost heroic.

“But meanwhile,” he added, quickly, “we must keep up this comedy of hatred which we luckily began from fear of my father. Remember that you are my prisoner for the moment.”

There was no time to be lost ; Leandro unlocked the door, and called the two officers who were awaiting him outside.

“There is nothing more to be done for the moment,” he said, coldly, “except to search the palace thoroughly. I must ask you for your keys, Signora Giacinta.” And he extended his hand roughly towards the bunch of keys at her waist.

Giacinta pushed away his hand.

“What right have you to require my keys ?” she asked, with dignity.

"The right," answered Leandro, "of your being my prisoner."

"Your prisoner? O heavens!" exclaimed Giacinta, in well-simulated wrath. "I your prisoner!"

"My prisoner, and in this house under my care at present," he continued, brutally.

She handed him the bunch of keys.

"Is there no further business?" she asked.

"None; except that, as you are for the moment a state prisoner, and it is only by courtesy that you are permitted to remain in your palace, I must give strict orders against your going or sending any one out, or receiving letters. I shall have the honour of interrogating you afresh to-morrow."

Leandro bowed and retired. He ordered a guard to be placed in the Busdrago palace, and

instituted a vigorous search through every nook and cranny for any trace of the fugitive Doge, upsetting and spoiling much rich furniture in the proceeding. The soldiers interchanged amused glances.

“When a Brighella is set to find a Busdrago the game is a serious one,” said they.

“And when a gallant has to seize the father of a lady who has always laughed at his beard, the matter is more exciting,” answered another.

Leandro Scappini, having placed sentries at the door of the Busdrago palace, and carrying its keys jingling in his pocket, returned to the palace of the Signory, and reported what he had done. His conduct was warmly approved.

“And how did that little hussy behave?” asked his father in a whisper.

"Proud as Lucifer ; but we shall humble the proud," answered Leandro.

After this Leandro mounted his horse, opened his parasol (as was the fashion with Bobbian officers on duty), and rode off, with an escort, towards the villa of Pantalone Busdrago. On they cantered through the green plain, till they came in sight of that famous villa which, with its statues, its quincunxes and waterworks, had been the admiration of all Italy, and which, built upon the site of the ancestral castle of the Scappini, had been so potent a cause of the hatred borne by the Generalissimo Brighella against Pantalone. They tied their horses to the immense cypress trees at the foot of the hill, and proceeded through the gardens, laid out in wonderful terraces, with box hedges fifteen feet high ; tritons and nereids, with toes as big as

your head ; labyrinths a quarter of a mile long ; mysterious artificial grottoes, where you were deluged with water by limestone satyrs ; benches which, when sat upon, gave a shower bath ; and a variety of other very ingenious, diverting, and gallant conceits, such as were at the height of fashion. Leandro and his party passed through all this, passed by the monogram of Pantalone Busdrago, surmounted by a coronet, and formed out of box borders, and flower-beds filled with blue, red, and yellow plaster, spread over a level space about as large as a small church, on to which, from the top of the hill, a colossal statue of Fame spouted water through her trumpet on Sundays and holidays. And the soldiers could not suppress exclamations of wonder and delight at the magnificence of the Magnificent Pantalone Busdrago.

To the admiring expressions of the officers who accompanied him Leandro answered, drily, "All this will fall to the state. My ancestors raised their castle walls on this spot ten centuries ago.

They came to the palace, throned on the top of the hill, and bristling with statues and pinnacles. Leandro called upon the steward to give up the keys. He cross-questioned him in private for a long time, as he had cross-questioned the Lady Giacinta Busdrago, and he instituted a search throughout the house—the cellars, the kitchens, the lumber-rooms, the attics, the secret passages, and chambers. Pantalone Busdrago could certainly be hidden nowhere. Baffled and enraged, Leandro departed with his troop, and returned to the Signory with the gradually growing conviction that the

ex-Doge must have crossed the frontier of the republic. Every day he made new researches, beating the country for miles and miles, examining witnesses for hours at a time, cross-questioning the Lady Giacinta Busdrago at least twenty times, ransacking the Busdrago villas and farms regularly three times a week, and daily declaring himself more and more persuaded that Pantalone Busdrago must be lurking in some adjoining duchy, grand-duchy, or republic.





CHAPTER XII.

THE Generalissimo Brighella was triumphant. His enemy was humiliated, degraded, declared a felon ; he himself was regarded as the saviour of the state, and was raised to a position far more influential and glorious, because more exceptional, than that of Doge. He was collecting, or, more strictly, manufacturing evidence against Pantalone Busdrago, such as must infallibly ruin him and his for ever. Leandro Scappini, whose

levity and weakness had been a source of constant irritation to his great father, was beginning to display an energy, an astuteness, and a hatred of the Busdrago family such as would never have been expected from him. All was prospering for Brighella, all, except one matter; and that was the business of Signora Olimpia Fantastici. In proportion to his anxiety to prevent her singing during the reign of his rival was Brighella's desire to make her sing as soon as himself should be invested with the supreme power. If Pantalone's inefficiency had subjected the commonwealth to every species of insult from the singer, the wisdom of Brighella must be able to bend and mould her like wax. At any price, Olimpia Fantastici must be got to sing. Brighella had tried every means. Through the medium of his

bravo, Arlecchino, and of the singer's waiting-maid, Colombina, he had attempted to work upon Olimpia's vanity, her cupidity, her curiosity, her timidity ; he had threatened and promised by turns all those things which his predecessor had feared to execute and feared to concede. All in vain. Olimpia Fantastici was as obstinate towards the Extraordinary Commissary Brighella as she had been towards the Doge Pantalone Busdrago. So, at length, Brighella had recourse to other means. He called his son.

"Leandro," he said, "I must entrust to thee a most difficult mission. Olimpia Fantastici must be got to sing at any price. I know the heart of women. Go thou, and do this work."

Leandro hung his head feebly.

"What am I to do at Olimpia Fantastici's?" he asked.

"To do?" cried his father. "Why, to make redhot love to her; to promise her wealth, titles, anything and everything: the temptation of marrying a noble is the highest existing for such a woman."

"Marry Olimpia Fantastici!" exclaimed Leandro; "I marry *her*!"

"Tut, tut," cried the Generalissimo, "how canst thou be such an ass? Promise, merely promise. What would be the use of promises if they had always to be kept, I wonder?"

So Leandro, impelled by the irresistible influence of the Generalissimo Brighella, betook himself to the hostelry of the "Sword of Orlando." He was horribly depressed, and totally indifferent to the mission on which he was being employed. He had indeed plucked up his courage sufficiently to secrete the fugitive

Pantalone Busdrago; he had had the spirit to keep up the game of hunting for the fugitive whom he was hiding, now in one place, now in another; but this state of things could not last much longer. The senate was sitting in trial on Pantalone Busdrago, and Leandro well knew that the trial would result in a sentence of death against the deposed Doge. He could indeed save Pantalone's life, but how save his fortune, his good fame! Giacinta and Giacinta's father would be exiles, fugitives, and beggars. And all this unjustly, through the plots of Leandro's own father, plots into which Leandro had let himself be dragged. When he remembered that evening that farce that was played to the Gobbo Truffaldino, that giving of the false recipe for the Doge's hundred soups, Leandro's heart sank within him. What had that recipe

been? He did not know; but he knew that it had been the cause of all the unhappy Pantalone's misfortunes; that the introduction into the palace of the fatal tin box, the final flight were alike due to that most fraudulent, abominable, and impious recipe. And, knowing all this, Leandro had not the courage to present himself before the unsuspecting Giacinta, who treated him as a hero, him the miserable cause of her father's misfortunes! So, with downcast glance and broken spirits, Leandro presented himself at the inn of the "Sword of Orlando." He naturally expected to be sent about his business, but he proved mistaken. Signora Olimpia Fantastici gave orders that Leandro Scappini be admitted. Signor Leandro made the most beautiful bow, sweeping the ground with the feathers of his hat, and delicately whisking imaginary

grains of snuff off his lace cravat, and then stood, not knowing what to say, before Signora Olimpia. She eyed him contemptuously for a moment and said—

“You are free to deliver the message with which your father has sent you.”

Leandro started and looked up crimson with confusion.

“Sent me? Who says so? Why?” he stammered in complete helplessness. The directness of the question had entirely upset him.

“Your father, the Generalissimo Brighella, has sent you to me,” she repeated.

Leandro had partially recovered his self-possession; he tried to look as if he were very much amazed.

“You are jesting,” he said. “Do you think my father would expose me to such terrible danger,

that he would send his only son to the great enchantress, Olimpia?"

Signora Olimpia tossed her head. "Your father thought you could persuade me to sing," she answered; "he has instructed you to come and make love to me. As my time is limited, I leave you to make love to my picture and to teach your declaration to my parrot, who can be relied upon for fidelity and secrecy."

And Signora Olimpia rose and walked to the door.

Leandro stood thunderstruck. On what a mission had he not been sent! What insults must he not be made to endure!

Signora Olimpia Fantastici remained standing, with her hand on the door-latch, looking at the crestfallen gallant with an air of ineffable amusement.

"Poor little creature," she said, "'tis not his fault after all. How could a colonel of light cavalry without horses withstand a Generalissimo who embroiders slippers?" And, turning towards him once more, she said—

"My dear Signor Leandro, why won't you frankly admit that your father has sent you to me? Why can't you say, Signora Olimpia, I am horribly afraid of my father; he has bid me go to you. I have obeyed his orders. I have come. Good morning. I have the honour to be your humble servant. Why can't you be frank?"

Leandro was so overwhelmed that he could scarcely speak; then, losing all patience and self-control, he exclaimed—

"Well, yes, Signora Olimpia Fantastici, I *have* been sent here by my father; I have not

come from any wish of my own. Are you satisfied? Good morning."

"Stop," said the singer coolly; "now we are beginning to understand one another. Sit down there."

Leandro, under the irresistible influence of a will even more imperious than that of his father, sat down passively.

"Good," remarked Signora Olimpia. "Now we can talk. Tell me, why are you afraid of your papa?"

"I am not," he denied feebly.

"Of course you are not. But just grant that you are for the moment. Why are you afraid of his embroidering needles?"

"But how do you know that I am afraid of him?" gasped poor Leandro, forgetting his denial in his amazement at this omniscience.

"How do I know? Why how do I know that you are in love with Giacinta Busdrago, that you helped your father in the masquerade performed before the Gobbo Truffaldino, that——"

"Signora Olimpia!" cried Leandro, "for heaven's sake——"

"That your father stopped the box of sandwiches and threw them out of the palace window."

Leandro stared wildly. This woman must be a witch or the devil. There must be devilry in all this. He crossed himself. She understood his thought.

"Why not?" she said. "You called me an enchantress. Perhaps I am one. Have you never heard of my doings?"

Poor Leandro, humiliated, astonished, terri-

fied, utterly broken-spirited, could only sigh out—

“If you know all this you must know that I am the most contemptible of mortals. But spare your insults.”

“I won’t insult you, poor little creature,” she repeated. “Tell me the whole story.”

Leandro could not resist. He seemed to be in a sort of trance, forced to speak despite himself; besides, the horrible secret had been pent up too long. He must confess, he must tell his misery. Olimpia Fantastici had uncorked him; his story flowed out freely.

So, seated opposite to the whimsical and imperious singer, Leandro Scappini narrated all his woes. He told her of the enmity against Pantalone Busdrago, which had rankled for years in the heart of Brighella; of Pantalone’s

fatal offer to buy the site of the castle of Brighella, which the Generalissimo had accepted through poverty, but had never forgiven, every stone of the Busdrago villa representing so much suppressed rage in the heart of Brighella. Then, how he had met and loved Giacinta Busdrago. How, from fear of their parents, they had played the comedy of mutual aversion and reciprocal insult. How this feigned contempt on the part of Giacinta had increased the Generalissimo's hatred towards Pantalone—hatred which became frenzy when, against all expectation, and in the teeth of Brighella's endeavours, the upstart noble was raised to the dignity of Doge. Leandro related what he knew of the business of the recipe of the hundred soups, of the subsequent misfortunes and final flight of the unlucky Pantalone. He

placed before Olimpia Fantastici his own miserable position, forced to connive at the ruin of the innocent father of his beloved, or forced to lay bare the plots of his own parent.

"What can I do?" he cried. "Alas, who was ever in such a position as mine?"

"It is a very common position for heroic young men in operas," answered Signora Olimpia; "at all events, you are in good company."

"You jeer at me," he cried. "Ah, why did I tell you all this!"

Signora Olimpia did not answer. She remained for a moment silent in thought, her fan resting against her beautiful, imperious chin. Then her face lit up with amusement. She struck her fan on her hand and said—

"I will help you out of your difficulties."

"Help me? But what can you do? What

can you advise ? If I remain silent, Giacinta's father loses all ; if I speak, my father is lost."

"Leave it to me, Signor Leandro. Remember that I am an enchantress. Set your mind at rest, and trust to me."

She was standing by the open spinet. She struck a chord, and, as she spoke the last words, burst into a wonderful, brilliant vocal phrase, triumphant, like her smile.

Leandro was seized with a sudden enthusiasm.

"I have faith in you, Signora Olimpia !" he exclaimed, seizing her hand and kissing it fervently.

"And now farewell," she said. "Continue as before. You shall soon hear from me."

Leandro again kissed her hand and departed. As he was stepping out of the hostelry of the "Sword of Orlando," he looked up to its



"BELIEVE AND HOPE," CRIED OLIMPIA.

windows. There, on the little twisted iron balcony, leaned the singer, her wonderful black curls rippled by the evening breeze. The young man made a deep bow, looked up with beaming face, and laid his hand on his heart.

"Believe and hope," cried Olimpia Fantastici, bending over the balcony and waving her hand.

Then the balcony was shut. But this little scene had not passed without a witness. Screened by the low, deep shade of the plane trees of the little square, stood a girl accompanied by a demure, dark-dressed woman. The girl's figure was half concealed by her long dark cloak, her face covered by the lace veil drawn about her fair head; but had any one approached, he would in a moment have recognized the Lady Giacinta Busdrago. The Lady

Giacinta had been given a certain amount of liberty, of which she had instantly availed herself to follow the movements of Leandro Scappini, whose strange, embarrassed manner and cold, short visits were beginning to excite her suspicions. That afternoon her vigilant and devoted nurse had brought word that Leandro Scappini had betaken himself to the "Sword of Orlando," whither the jealous Giacinta immediately followed him.

That glimpse of Olimpia Fantastici on the balcony, that gesture of Leandro, those words, "Believe and hope!" revealed a whole world of wickedness to Giacinta, explained in a second the altered looks of her lover. She seized the arm of her nurse and hurried home.

"How could I believe in a Brighella!" was all she could ejaculate on the way. Once at home,

she dried her tears, drew herself up, and said to her nurse—

“I can be revenged. Run and send word that the noble Lady Giacinta Busdrago wishes to speak without delay with the Senator Scaramuccia.”





CHAPTER XIII.

THE Senator Scaramuccia at first felt much offended at being sent for in this way. Why could not the Lady Giacinta Busdrago come to him if she had anything to say? However, curiosity respecting the communication she might make, and the general desire of bullying the fallen, induced the descendant of Julius Cæsar to betake himself to the Busdrago palace. With stiff deportment and wrathful countenance, Scaramuccia came into the presence of the Lady Giacinta.

"You desired to speak to me, Lady Giacinta," he said; "and although I am not in the habit of consulting the wishes of others, I know that respect towards a lady is required of a man of my station."

Poor Giacinta was too mad with rage against Leandro to give any weight to these words. She felt the necessity of plunging into a desperate action; she was half afraid of her own good sense and calmness returning.

"Senator Scaramuccia," she said in the manner most straightforward and to the point, "two months ago you informed my father of your desire to marry me. Since that time I have reconsidered the matter, and beg to inform you that if you are still of the same mind, I am ready to become your wife." She spoke rapidly, disdainfully. She despised Scaramuccia from

the bottom of her soul. She regarded him as a mere worthless instrument, by means of which she would be avenged on the faithless Leandro; though what injury her marrying a man she detested would do the man who no longer cared about her, is and ever will be a profound logical problem. Be that as it may, to the Lady Giacinta Busdrago such conduct seemed the most evident and natural mode of revenge, and on revenge she was bent.

The Senator Scaramuccia could have jumped for surprise and delight, but, remembering his great descent and personal dignity, he affected to consider that he was conferring a great honour on the lady.

He rose solemnly, laid his hand on his heart, and said—

“Lady Giacinta, I will not hide from you that

your incomparable charming virtues have subjugated this heart, and that the feelings of a Scaramuccia are unchangeable. Such is the force of my love, that, instead of hesitating to unite my illustrious house with that of Busdrago, I am overcome by joy; for such a lady as the Lady Giacinta is enough to ennoble any family however plebeian, and it is a Scaramuccia who declares it."

And he advanced and kissed her hand. Giacinta Busdrago drew back with instinctive disgust. She had done her work, but she had no wish to prolong the situation. "For the moment, then," she said, coldly, "there is nothing further to say, Senator Scaramuccia, I think."

Scaramuccia was standing biting his lips and frowning beneath his black horsehair peruke: something was troubling him.

"I might indeed," he answered, solemnly waving his hand—"I might indeed expatiate on my happiness."

"Spare yourself the trouble," interrupted Giacinta. "I think, then, that we have said all that need be said."

Again Scaramuccia bit his lips and knit his brows; then, drawing a heavy leathern-draped armchair near that of the Lady Giacinta, and casting furtive glances round the room, he bent forward and said in a whisper, "There is more than you think. There is treachery somewhere."

"What do you mean, sir?" asked Giacinta, pushing away her chair. "Did you refer to Leandro?"

"I mean that there are secrets in this world. Treachery, Lady Giacinta! plots—plots against your father. There are persons—— But I will

not speak my suspicions. Let it suffice. We know what we mean." And again looking round, he nodded his head ominously, and rolled his large round eyes.

"What do you mean?" cried Giacinta. "Explain, Senator Scaramuccia!"

He took her wrist, and made a gesture of silence.

"I mean," he whispered, "what I mean. The Generalissimo Brighella. I will say no more."

Giacinta stared in amazement, and would have pressed him for an explanation, but he hurriedly bowed himself off, kissing his finger tips towards her.

The Lady Giacinta remained standing in deep perplexity. What had happened, and what did all this mean? Brighella? Leandro's father? Was it possible that Leandro could have been

deceiving her, and plotting against her father at the same time ? And all his apparent desire to secrete Pantalone Busdrago ? Was that perhaps part of the plot ? No, she could not believe it. Leandro was a traitor, an infamous deceiver, but—but she could not believe that he had never loved her ; she would not admit to herself that she still loved him enough to trust in his honour. No ! It must be all an invention of this odious Scaramuccia ! Ah, Leandro ! Why had he forced her into giving herself to this creature ? Why had he not been faithful, or at least frank ! She was the most ill-used of young women.

And she burst into a flood of tears, never reflecting (as young ladies of a passionate nature never do reflect) that it was she herself who had decided on the odious marriage, and that she

had not even a thorough proof of Leandro's guilt.

While the Lady Giacinta Busdrago was thus bewailing her wretched fate, the Senator Scaramuccia, back at the palace of the Signory, and seated at a table, and propping his head on his hands, was immersed in deep and disagreeable reflections. He had been caught in his own trap! He did not blame himself, for he never blamed himself for anything; but he quivered with rage against the Generalissimo Brighella. What the deuce had Brighella to do with Pantalone Busdrago? What business had the old fox to entangle him, Scaramuccia, in his plots? He could have strangled the Generalissimo with pleasure. What had he to do with Brighella and Pantalone? Ah, if ever he could catch that Brighella! And Scaramuccia squeezed

his thumb between his fingers. Here was Giacinta Busdrago willing to marry him, and the marriage rendered useless. Where was her immense dower? All would be seized by the state; or, even if some remained, he would be marrying the daughter of a disgraced and condemned man, a man with a price on his head! And all this entirely by Brighella's doing! If Brighella had let Pantalone alone, Scaramuccia would now be about to marry the richest heiress in Bobbio! And all this frustrated by Brighella! What was he to do? The villain had bound him hand and foot. If he revealed the Generalissimo's plots, he would reveal his own participation in them; if Brighella fell, he, Scaramuccia, would be dragged down with him. Was there no way? Absolutely none? If only he could show up

Brighella without running any risk himself? Scaramuccia vainly racked his brains to find a solution to the matter. All his plans proved fallacious. Do what he might, he would be discovered if he tried to show up Brighella. A bright thought struck him: he would write an anonymous letter to the senate. But then there would be a trial; Brighella would accuse him. No, it was useless.

At that moment came a knock at the door. The lacquey announced Arlecchino, with a special message from his master, the Generalissimo Brighella, Extraordinary Commissary of the Republic. The Senator Scaramuccia turned round angrily, and informed the lacquey that Arlecchino and the message might go to the devil; and then stretched himself out gloomily in an armchair. But the Generalissimo's bravo

declined the invitation, and insisted that he must see Scaramuccia, as the matter was one of supreme importance.

Scaramuccia was suddenly seized with a violent desire to have the Generalissimo's messenger, in default of the Generalissimo himself, soundly cudgelled by his lacqueys ; so he gave orders to admit him. The bravo, in his tight mottled and patched livery, made his appearance, and bowed deep before the senator.

"The Generalissimo Brighella," he said, "sends greetings to the Most Ample Senator Scaramuccia, and lets him know that Signora Olimpia Fantastici, having declared her desire to see the recipe for the Hundred Soups which are served up to the Doge of Bobbio, the Signory have judged that this desire might reasonably be gratified. The Generalissimo

Brighella, therefore, requests your Excellency, as Major-domo of the ducal palace, to take all necessary measures to this effect."

The Senator Scaramuccia was at first so astonished and bewildered by this message as to forget all else. What! Brighella was giving orders to publish to the whole world the terrible recipe of the Hundred Soups? Was Brighella mad? Scaramuccia's heavy intellect reeled. But Arlecchino, waiting for an answer, produced from his bosom a folded piece of paper and handed it to Scaramuccia. He took it and glanced over it.

"Dearest Scaramuccia," ran the note, "this foolish woman wants the recipe for the Doge's soup. I myself, and the whole senate have vainly tried to persuade her of the real fact, namely, that no such recipe exists, as the ducal

soup differs in no way from that of other mortals. But she insists, and we must humour her absurdities ; so bid the cook of the Signory write out any soup recipe that enters his head (one is as good as another), and send it up to Signora Olimpia, who is determined to eat soup after the ducal recipe. I am dying with laughter, and so are all the senate. Thine BRIGHELLA."

"The Generalissimo Brighella wrote this note in the council chamber, and read it to the Most Ample Senators," said Arlecchino, with a grin, "and the Signory was very much amused at the joke."

Scaramuccia's eyes lit up ; he laughed a loud, violent, strange laugh.

"Tell the Generalissimo that the joke is worth its weight in gold," he said, his hands on

his sides. "Upon my honour, I never heard a better joke. Tell thy master I appreciate it, and shall immediately follow his instructions."

Arlecchino retired. The Senator Scaramuccia rang his bell.

"Send me the Gobbo Truffaldino, the cook of the Signory," he ordered. As the door shut upon the lacquey, Scaramuccia struck the table with his fist.

"Ah, Brighella, old villain! I have thee!" he exclaimed. "Innocence shall be avenged! Thy villainy shall be discovered! Giacinta Busdrago shall have her dower! Thou hast slipped thy neck into the noose."

The arrival of the Gobbo Truffaldino in his white cook's dress and cap interrupted his soliloquy. Scaramuccia locked the door, and bade the timorous humpback advance.

"Truffaldino," he said, "produce the recipe for the Hundred Soups of the Doge."

Truffaldino turned ashy pale, and trembled all over. He remembered the terrible fate that would overtake him if the existence of that mysterious piece of parchment were revealed.

"There is no recipe," he faltered.

"No recipe? You dog! you dare to tell me that?" roared the senator.

"There is none, indeed!" cried poor Truffaldino, piteously.

"That is false! There is that piece of parchment which was given thee by the—that was given thee the evening before thy engagement."

"Mercy, mercy!" cried Truffaldino, throwing himself on his knees; "the saints are witness to my not having revealed it! What will become of me? Alas! alas! I am a dead man."

"Nonsense," answered Scaramuccia, laughing despite himself; "all that was merely to try thy fidelity. Produce the recipe."

The humpback tremblingly fumbled in his doublet, and drew from it the mysterious piece of parchment.

Scaramuccia snatched at it. Yes, that was it, the strange recipe with the appalling names and the mysterious marks of multiplication. He did not open it; he gave it back to the humpback.

"Well, excellent Truffaldino," he said, with a forced laugh, "it is not I who am studying ducal cookery, nor who want to see the recipe. Take it to Signora Olimpia Fantastici at the inn of the 'Sword of Orlando,' and give all necessary explanations."

Truffaldino stared in amazement.

"Look here," said Scaramuccia, "if thou doubt." And taking a piece of paper emblazoned with the arms of Bobbio, he wrote rapidly—

"Julius Cæsar Scaramuccia, Major-domo of the Commonwealth of Bobbio, has the honour, by the express order of the Signory, and of the Most Excellent Extraordinary Commissary Brighella, to send to Signora Olimpia Fantastici, the Cook of the Republic, who will hand to her the recipe of the soup prepared for the ducal table, and give all desired explanations.

"P.S.—Signora Olimpia Fantastici may either keep the recipe or return it, when examined, to the Secretary of the Senate."

This note he read to Truffaldino, sealed it with his seal of office, and bade the humpback hasten to the hostelry of the "Sword of Orlando.

“Ah, Brighella!” exclaimed Scaramuccia when once more alone, “I have thee. Thou thoughtest I should send a recipe ‘like any other’—a recipe prepared for the occasion, and hold back thy own recipe for abomination in the ascending scale. Ah, what a splendid joke! What an unparalleled joke! The spider caught in his own meshes!”





CHAPTER XIV.

WHILE the events recorded in the foregoing chapters were taking place unnoticed, the senate of Bobbio was sitting in trial on Pantalone Busdrago. Day after day did the senate meet in the great Hall of Hercules, while an eager crowd stationed in the square below awaited a final decision. Witnesses were examined by the score, witnesses diligently discovered by the indefatigable patriotism of the Extraordinary Commissary

of the Republic ; speeches, worthy of Demosthenes and Cicero, were made from morning till night ; the members of the Signory were growing quite thin and haggard from their cares, and only after a month was a decision come to.

The Extraordinary Commissary of the Republic officially announced to the people of Bobbio and to the foreign potentates, that the ex-Doge, Pantalone Busdrago, had been found guilty of high treason against the commonwealth, and that he was condemned by the senate to expiate his crimes by death and by confiscation of his inheritance. The execution of this sentence was fixed for the 8th of September of the current year of our Lord 1695, in the presence of all the relatives and former servants of the said Pantalone Busdrago. A

thrill of horror ran through the people of Bobbio on this announcement. The Lady Giacinta Busdrago fainted at the news, but when she recovered she said to her nurse, with a smile through her tears—

“It is not so bad after all ; we shall be beggars and exiles, but my father will yet be safe, and we can begin life afresh in distant lands.”

Leandro Scappini hastened with the evil tidings to Signora Olimpia Fantastici.

“You bid me hope!” he exclaimed. “And is this all my reward?”

The singer smiled and answered briefly, “Patience, I repeat ; believe and hope.”

The Generalissimo Brighella, on the other hand, could scarcely repress a smile of triumph as, with simulated reluctance, he read the sen-

tence to the assembled notables of the city. But from the other end of the council table the Senator Scaramuccia raised his eyes from under their ferocious brows and mumbled in his teeth—

“He does not know what a bitter broth is being cooked for him with his own recipe.”

The fatal 8th of September at length arrived. During the whole night and morning the hammers of workmen sounded through the palace square, for a scaffold was being erected, together with several tribunes for magistrates and notables. The price of windows and balconies on the square had risen to a fabulous height. Would Pantalone Busdrago be discovered at the last moment? Was he, perhaps, already in the dungeons of the palace? Opinions were divided on this point.

Some said that Pantalone Busdrago in person would suffer ; others averred that a straw effigy of the traitor Doge would be burned in his default. The hour for the execution was fixed for the evening, on account of the intense heat, which would inconvenience spectators if it took place in the daytime. Seats were offered to the ambassadors and dignitaries ; and the Extraordinary Commissary Brighella courteously offered a reserved place to Signora Olimpia Fantastici, a distinction which the lady received with her usual rudeness, answering that the commonwealth might invite her to a more pleasing performance than the execution of a bonâ fide Doge, or to a less trumpery show than the burning of a straw puppet. And she gave instructions to her coachman to be at her door

two hours before the event, as she intended taking a drive in the country.

As the sun declined and the heat diminished, the large square before the ducal palace gradually began to fill. Detachments of soldiers arrived, and formed a row on either side of the immense central tribune, draped with black and silver, and the back of which was concealed by a black velvet curtain. The spectators began to crowd to the windows and balconies, and, those who had received instructions, to take their place in the side tribunes. By five o'clock the whole square was one mass of human heads, of jostling, breathless spectators; and all the adjacent streets were swarming with citizens. At half-past five the great bell of the cathedral began to toll with funereal sound, and the various guilds, with their flags

and trumpets, entered the square, followed at a short distance by the many confraternities, —white, black, and gray—cowled and hooded, bearing torches and banners with images of the saints, and the processions of the clergy and religious communities of Bobbio, bearing wax candles. They were marshalled in proper order by the heralds of the commonwealth, in a large circle round the central tribune. Then came a flourish of trumpets and a rolling of drums, and there issued from out of the palace the members of the Signory of Bobbio, the senators in black furred robes, headed by the Generalissimo Brighella in full uniform, carrying in his hand the great banner of the commonwealth, and preceded by heralds and pages in the colours of Bobbio. The procession of the Signory gravely marched two by two through the ranks of the

Swiss guard, up the carpeted steps of the central tribune, and noiselessly each senator sat down in his appointed place, on a raised amphitheatre-shaped platform. The bell ceased tolling, and the drums began to roll. All eyes were directed to the central tribune, to a low stool on which a lady, draped and veiled in black, was being conducted by Leandro Scappini, colonel of the sole regiment of the state. It was Giacinta Busdrago. Was she condemned to witness only her father's shame or his death? A thrill of horror passed through the crowd. The trumpets again sounded and the pages withdrew the curtain hiding the back of the tribune. There stood a vast and regularly constructed pile of wood, on the top of which, surrounded by faggots and lashed to a stake, loomed a black-robed figure. A cry of horror

burst from every throat. But, no, it was not Pantalone Busdrago; it was merely a straw and rag puppet, the effigy of the traitorous Doge. At each corner of the stake stood one of the hangmen of the republic, dressed in tight-fitting scarlet jerkin and hose, their faces hidden by a black mask, each with a burning torch in his hand, awaiting the signal to set fire to the faggots. There was another flourish of trumpets, and then there stepped forward to the edge of the central tribune the venerable herald in chief of the commonwealth, the arms of Bobbio embroidered on his silken doublet, a long black scarf tied round his arm. After a moment of deep silence, the herald spoke in clear, loud tones—

“The Serene Signory of Bobbio make known to all their noble members and loyal subjects,



and to the respected strangers here assembled, and to every one everywhere whom it may concern, that they have found guilty of high treason, degraded from his rank, effaced from the list of nobles, fined in all his property, and condemned to death, the man named Pantalone Busdrago, formerly noble of the town and late Doge of Bobbio. And, once more, before the execution of the sentence, the Serene Signory of Bobbio invite to come forward whomsoever may feel inclined to vindicate and enter into battle on behalf of the said Pantalone Busdrago."

So saying, the herald drew from his right hand the heavily embroidered glove, and cast it down on the topmost step of the flight leading up to the tribune. The spectators looked on deeply awe-stricken, but well aware that this mediæval challenge was a mere obsolete and

meaningless formality. When, suddenly, a noise of rapid wheels and galloping horses was heard ; and, quick as lightning, a magnificent coach, drawn by four milk-white horses, dashed up the avenue formed by the Swiss guard, and stopped at the foot of the tribune. The door of the vehicle was opened in a second, and there got out and walked deliberately up the steps a tall and majestic woman, arrayed in dark purple, which trailed behind her like the robe of a queen. What was this sudden apparition? Was it a saint? or some strange visitor from the world of the dead? She stooped, picked up the glove thrown down by the herald, turned round to the crowd, and held up the glove.

A cry of surprise and enthusiasm burst from all lips.

It was Olimpia Fantastici. She bowed her head slightly, and then, addressing the astounded senators, said : "I, Olimpia Fantastici, come forward to vindicate and do battle for the man called Pantalone Busdrago, unjustly accused and condemned by the machinations of a traitor."

She paused an instant. The crowd, moved to enthusiasm by the strange words and the strange, imperious fascination of that voice, burst into applause.

"And I, Olimpia Fantastici, do now, in the presence of the senate and people of Bobbio, accuse as a traitor, *you*, Generalissimo Scappino Scappini, Count of Brighella and Extraordinary Commissary of the Republic."

"Seize that woman!" shouted Brighella, springing up from his seat. "Seize that mad

and audacious woman, and take her off to prison."

Two or three Swiss guards came forward and surrounded the singer. Olimpia Fantastici calmly waved them off. The crowd shouted, "Let her speak!"

"Lead her off at once, do you hear?" again shouted Brighella, crimson with rage.

"Let her speak!" again shouted the multitude.

The guards, not knowing whom to obey, remained standing, waiting passively.

"Senate and people of Bobbio," went on Olimpia Fantastici, "I here accuse the Generalissimo Brighella of plotting to dethrone the legitimate Doge Pantalone Busdrago."

"Can you listen to such raving?" cried Brighella, losing all self-control. "Arrest the woman. And you," turning towards the people,

“in the name of the commonwealth, I command you to disperse!”

There was an ominous stir in the crowd, then a few voices cried, “We will not disperse till we have heard what she has to say!”

“We cannot make them disperse,” whispered the eldest of the senators to the infuriated Brighella; “they are more numerous than the soldiers, and all the entrances to the square are blocked by the people.”

“Act as you will,” cried Brighella, “but I, as Commissary of the Commonwealth, order the people to disperse at once, or the soldiers shall disperse them!”

“And I,” retorted Olimpia Fantastici, turning towards the crowd, “command you to remain until I have spoken.” Again a movement and a murmur ran through the crowd.

Olimpia Fantastici seized the opportunity. Turning partly to the senatorial seats, partly to the people below, she spoke, and her words penetrated to the furthest parts of the square.

"I, Olimpia Fantastici, do here accuse the Generalissimo Brighella of plotting to dethrone the Doge Pantalone Busdrago. I accuse him of having forged a false recipe for the hundred soups of the Doge, according to which they were to be made abominably uneatable, in perfectly regular increasing proportion, with the object of inducing the Doge to secretly introduce other food into the palace, thereby incurring suspicion of treachery."

"The drums!" screamed Brighella, "drown her voice!"

But not a drumstick moved.

Olimpia Fantastici merely smiled. "As

witnesses to this," she continued, "I call forward the Senator Scaramuccia, the humpback Truffaldino, the Generalissimo's bravo, Arlecchino, and the Generalissimo's own son, Leandro Scappini, forced by his father into passive complicity in these atrocious plots. And," she added, as the crowd murmured in astonishment, "if further proof be needed, I offer this piece of parchment, the false recipe of the hundred ducal soups, given by the Generalissimo Brighella, masked and mumed for the occasion, to the humpback Truffaldino, whom he had carried, gagged and blindfolded, to his palace by his bravo Arlecchino."

And so saying, she held out the mysterious piece of parchment. With the bound of a leopard, the Generalissimo Brighella sprang forward to seize it; but he was too late,

Olimpia Fantastici had cast it far into the crowd, crying, "I entrust it to the people of Bobbio."

Loud applause and cries of "Down with Brighella! Down with the traitor!" saluted this action.

"Moreover," continued Olimpia Fantastici, "the Generalissimo Brighella, through the agency of his bravo, tried to stimulate me to make requests which, if granted, must for ever compromise the Doge, and, if denied, must prevent my singing."

Now, indeed, the people roared with fury: "He has prevented her singing! He is at the bottom of her not singing!"

"Just so," answered she, taking no notice of the maddened Brighella nor of the frightened senators. "And, listen; so long as injustice exists in Bobbio, Olimpia Fantastici will never

sing a note. She sings for honest folk, not for knaves."

"Long live Olimpia Fantastici!" shouted the multitude.

"Say rather," she answered, "'Long Live Pantalone Busdrago, rightful Doge of Bobbio!' Senate and people of Bobbio, when justice shall be done, then will I sing; when Pantalone Busdrago be reinstated in office, then shall you hear me."

"Pantalone Busdrago! Where is Pantalone Busdrago?" bellowed the crowd. "Give him up to us! We want to have him back! Where is the Prince of the Hundred Soups? What have you done with the Doge?"

The Signory, ashy pale, exchanged confused murmurs; then the eldest senator came forward and said, "People of Bobbio, the Signory knows

no more of Pantalone Busdrago than do you. He has disappeared."

"It is false ; it is false ! Give him up ! " howled the throng.

"Upon the honour of Bobbio and all the relics of the cathedral, we do not know what has become of Pantalone Busdrago," insisted the representative of the senate.

"Do you truly want Pantalone Busdrago with the object of repairing the injustice which has been done to him ? " asked the singer, solemnly.

There was a universal cry of "Yes ! "

"Then," she proceeded slowly, "Pantalone Busdrago, Doge of Bobbio, come forward ! "

The door of the coach which had brought the singer opened, and in a moment a figure attired in the purple robes of the Doge mounted the steps and stood on the tribune.

It was Pantalone Busdrago.

He was very much changed, thin, haggard, and pale. At the sight of the crowd and of the senate he leaned against the parapet overcome by emotion. Olimpia Fantastici took him by the hand.

"Senate and people of Bobbio," she said, "are you willing to repair your injustice towards the Magnificent Pantalone Busdrago?"

"Yes, yes," roared the people. "Long live Pantalone Busdrago, Doge of Bobbio."

"Long live Pantalone Busdrago!" cried the senators, "Doge of Bobbio for life!"

"And you," continued Olimpia Fantastici, "you, Pantalone Busdrago, are you ready to forgive your enemies, to let off Arlecchino and Scaramuccia with their shabby little lives? Will you be satisfied if Brighella return for ever to

his embroidery frame and never more meddle with state concerns. And will you cancel the family enmity by marrying your daughter to her faithful Leandro Scappini? Are you ready to do all this?"

"Yes," answered poor Pantalone Busdrago, overcome by joy and bursting into tears.

"Good," said Olimpia Fantastici. "And now, senate and people of Bobbio, I will sing." And coming forward on the scaffolding, she burst out into a more triumphant song, and with a more clear and triumphant voice, than she had ever before been known to do.

And thus ends the story of the Magnificent Pantalone Busdrago, Prince of the Hundred Soups.



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